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History, Cosmos and Field Theory

A Critically Constructive Re-examination of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Theology of History with a View to the Question of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom

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**HISTORY, COSMOS AND FIELD THEORY: A
CRITICALLY CONSTRUCTIVE RE-EXAMINATION OF
WOLFHART PANNENBERG'S THEOLOGY OF HISTORY
WITH A VIEW TO THE QUESTION OF DIVINE
SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN FREEDOM**

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A Thesis presented for

PhD in Philosophical Theology

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January 2018

Abstract

With a view to the more ultimate goal of providing fresh perspectives to address the perennial theological problem of the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human freedom, this thesis undertakes a critically constructive re-examination of fundamental orientations guiding Wolfhart Pannenberg's thought, arguing that, when properly read through the far-reaching and decisive influences of Duns Scotus and Friedrich Schelling, influences hitherto only scantily acknowledged, Pannenberg's overarching theology, from very early in his career to his latest writings, must be understood throughout as a 'theology of history,' and that when so understood, can also be seen as manifesting a previously unacknowledged unity and consistency. The critical demonstration of the deep influences of Scotus and Schelling, most notably for my purposes, on Pannenberg's understanding of history and contingency crucially also makes possible a re-evaluation and a particular modification of Pannenberg's use of field theory, which will contribute significantly to the goal of showing in new ways the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human freedom.

The thesis begins with an examination of Pannenberg's earliest works to establish the importance of contingency, understood in Scotist terms, and the influence of Schelling on Pannenberg's view of history. Building upon a view of history as contingent and purposed, the thesis demonstrates that Pannenberg's concept of history encompasses all of cosmic history and dismisses any distinction between histories, such as *Historie* and *Geschichte*, as artificial. The thesis shows that to affirm the sovereignty of God, Pannenberg maintains that the end of history is so assured as to have been seen proleptically in the historical resurrection of Christ. Likewise, in order to maintain the freedom of humanity, Pannenberg argues that, in one sense, God is not yet fully manifest in his sovereignty, yet he continues to interact within and create history as a manifestation of himself within which his creation moves contingently and freely. However, the thesis argues that the simultaneous affirmation of both positions is possible only when channelled through vital aspects of the influence of Scotus and Schelling and through a crucial reframing of Pannenberg's use of field theory, which must be understood in temporal rather than material terms. By presenting himself as the defined end of history to the present moment, God is shown to give the temporal field into which creatures respond 'ecstatically' to such an end in a way that affirms the present and future contingency and freedom of human action, without denying the sovereignty of God.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

- ATP.....Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. Translated by Matthew J O’Connell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985
- BQT1, 2, 3Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Basic Questions in Theology*. Vols. I-III. Translated and edited by George Kehm and R. A. Wilson. London: SCM Press, 1967-1973.
- CD.....Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. 5 volumes. Edited and Translated by T. F. Torrance and Geoffrey Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975.
- ISTPannenberg, Wolfhart. *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- JGMPannenberg, Wolfhart. *Jesus—God and Man*. Translated by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968.
- MIG.....Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*. Translated by Philip Clayton. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.
- RAH.....Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Revelation as History*. Translated by David Granskou. London: Collier-MacMillan, 1969.
- ST1, 2, 3.....Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology*. Vols. 1-3. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991-1998.
- TKGPannenberg, Wolfhart. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*. Translated by Richard John Neuhaus. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969.
- TPSPannenberg, Wolfhart. *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*. Translated by Francis McDonagh. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1976.
- TTN.....Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Towards a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith*. Edited by Ted Peters. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
- WIM.....Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. Translated by Duane A. Priebe. Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1970.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis develops two intertwining trajectories, yielding two mutually supporting outcomes, one more methodological in character and the other more theologically constructive. First, this thesis presents Pannenberg's broader corpus as a single 'theology of history' thereby presenting his theology as more unified than the usual interpretation of Pannenberg, which generally suggests a division between his early works as a 'theology of history' and his later works, after 'Theological Questions to Scientists,' as a shift away from that theology. Second, I argue that, by interpreting Pannenberg's theology as one of history, fresh and unique insights come to light for addressing the perennial problem of divine sovereignty vis-à-vis human freedom. This is accomplished by demonstrating the centrality of the influence of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling and John Duns Scotus upon Pannenberg, as well as through reframing Pannenberg's application of 'field theory' in order to clarify it and ultimately adapt to a new understanding of the structure of time.

The general consensus among those who have engaged in a systematic study of Pannenberg is that, while his early work is primarily concerned with history and the relation of theology to it, exemplified by such works of *Revelation as History*, and *Jesus—God and Man*, he abandoned the question of history later in his career, usually traced to either around the time of his 'Theological Questions to Scientists' or just prior to his *Systematic Theology*. For both Stanley Grenz and Christiaan Mostert, Pannenberg had abandoned the question of history to pursue a theology of hope or the eschaton, similar to

that of Jürgen Moltmann's project.¹ For Ted Peters, Pannenberg's later theology is a 'theology of nature' reflecting Peters's own concern with injecting theology into a physics discussion, ignoring much of Pannenberg's more nuanced approach to the natural sciences, which is from an historical and philosophical, not scientific, perspective.²

While it is the case that Pannenberg begins to apply scientific discoveries, to his theology, the role of science within Pannenberg's theology is always secondary to the role of history. Although Pannenberg's personal perspective on how science and theology interact, largely through the medium of philosophy of science, is addressed in chapter five, some introductory remarks may be helpful, especially considering the way Pannenberg dialogues with science is pervasive throughout much of the thesis. Ian Barbour's fourfold categorization of science-religion interaction, which suggests the such dialogue is either understood as in conflict, as two independent realms, as in dialogue, or as a complete integration, is helpful on a basic level, but fails to grasp the nuance within which Pannenberg operates.³

One might place Pannenberg within the 'integration' scheme that Barbour outlines,⁴ but Pannenberg himself rejects this notion, arguing that science and religion can only meet via the intermediary discipline of Philosophy of Science. So Pannenberg's interest in science, we might argue, is a philosophical, rather than purely scientific one. Yet Pannenberg's interest in the philosophical implications of scientific investigation upon his theology are not ones made in their own right. Rather, Pannenberg is interested in science,

¹ Christiaan Mostert, *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God*, (London: T&T Clark, 2002); Stanley Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

² See Ted Peters, "Editor's Introduction" in *Towards a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith* by Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed. by Ted Peters (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 7-9 (hereafter TTN).

³ See Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, a revised edition of *Religion in an Age of Science*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 77-105.

⁴ Indeed this is likely behind Ted Peters's decision to title his collection of Pannenberg's essays *Towards a Theology of Nature*, considering the use of term 'Theology of Nature,' in Barbour's Gifford lectures, upon which *Religion in an Age of Science* is based, as epitomizing the integrative approach.

or rather the philosophy of science, largely because he understands scientific investigation, at its core, to be involved in the same pursuit as a philosophy of history. For Pannenberg, as will be discussed in chapters two, three, and four, all human investigations are, at their core, part of an overarching philosophy or theology of history, a view Pannenberg took from Friedrich Schelling.⁵ Additionally, history, for Pannenberg as discussed in chapter three, encompasses all temporal causal occurrences, and must be properly understood theocentrically, rather than anthropocentrically. Scientific investigation, and particularly physics, is of interest to Pannenberg precisely where it is concerned with providing an explanation for causal occurrences, which he understands to fit into his broader theology of history.⁶

Mostert engages with trinitarian themes in Pannenberg's theology in an attempt to tie Pannenberg's theology together, but it is Timothy Bradshaw who exemplifies the attempt to portray Pannenberg's overarching theological project as a 'theology of the Trinity' only briefly mentioning in his introduction Pannenberg's concern with history.⁷ In contrast, one of the major claims developed in this thesis is that a theology of history, which can be traced back as early as Pannenberg's doctoral dissertation, a document to which no scholar of Pannenberg pays more than passing reference, is the theme that unifies Pannenberg's theology and demonstrates a remarkable level of coherence. By viewing theology through an historical lens, Pannenberg makes an epistemic and methodological claim that all knowledge concerning God is derived historically, not through a text nor philosophical reflection alone, and that the concept of history is extended beyond human history to encompass all temporal events in the universe.

⁵ See chapter 2.

⁶ Compared to other branches of science, Pannenberg has relatively little to say. His only references to biology are as they concern the evolutionary development of life and its increasing complexity, and he says nothing with respect to Chemistry.

⁷ See also Timothy Bradshaw, *Pannenberg: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

If Pannenberg's overarching theological project is a theology of history, then his central goal is to give an account of the nature of divine action upon the world. For Pannenberg, the difficulty is describing historical action as sovereign while also doing so in such a way that it does not overwhelm the inherent contingency of his creation in general and humanity in particular. As will be argued in this thesis, a theology of history maintains a doctrine of divine sovereignty precisely because the actions of God within history reveal him to be sovereign. In order to speak meaningfully about God acting sovereignly within history, one must connect divine sovereignty with human freedom. In this thesis, this is done primarily via the concept of contingency, which finds its roots, for Pannenberg, in John Duns Scotus. Pannenberg then extends this application to historical investigation through Friedrich Schelling.

Given that the contingency of history is a foundational component both to elucidating Pannenberg's overarching theology of history and to addressing the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom, the first chapter is concerned with defining the term in detail, particularly as utilised by John Duns Scotus. The concept is initially explored from the standpoint of Pannenberg's doctoral dissertation.⁸ As Scotus defines the term, an act is contingent if and only if the agent performing the act could have done otherwise.

The second chapter speaks more directly to the historical context necessary for freedom. Pannenberg's own reason for pursuing the historical question likely rests in his use of Scotus's concept of contingency, which is necessarily historical, that is to say, related to temporally occurring events. In Pannenberg's introduction to *Revelation as History*, he applies Schelling's later work, which was concerned with an overarching philosophy of history, as a criticism against Barth. Using Pannenberg's introductory essay as an entry into examining his theology of history in its own right, we may begin to build a cohesive picture of Pannenberg's theology through interpreting much of it in

⁸ Pannenberg's dissertation has considerable citation in the field of Scotist studies, but not outside of it.

light of the Schelling's broader corpus. Understanding Pannenberg in light of Schelling's broader corpus is also essential for avoiding the persistent misconception that Pannenberg's theology is Hegelian.

Pannenberg, in a 1990 interview, laments that the one area where theologians continue to misunderstand his theology is with respect to Hegel. Pannenberg states explicitly 'I am not a Hegelian,' before later concluding that he does not basis his theology on Hegel in any part, noting that 'His [Hegel's] ideas, for example, are not as good as those of Wilhelm Dilthey, to whose assumptions in the area of hermeneutics I am indebted.'⁹ The idea was once much more persistent among interpreters of Pannenberg, than it was later in his career.¹⁰ Early on, Merold Westphal noted that *Revelation as History* follows an argument that 'may well be the most articulate anti-Hegelian since Kierkegaard.'¹¹ This is expanded upon by Philip Clayton in his more widely read assessment of Pannenberg in 1988.¹² Since then, the overwhelming majority of interpreters readily acknowledge the ways in which Pannenberg is distinct from, or critical of, Hegel.¹³ Yet the claim is still persistent, showing

⁹ Michael Bauman, *Roundtable: Conversations with European Theologians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990).

¹⁰ See, for instance, Alan Galloway *Wolfhart Pannenberg*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1973), one of the earliest extended treatments of this, but also Ronald D. Pasquariello, 'Pannenberg's Philosophical Foundations' *Journal of Religion*, 56 (1976): 338-347. Cornelius Venema 'History, Human Freedom and the Idea of God in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,' *Calvin Theological Journal* 17 (1986): 207-223; and Roger E. Olson 'The Human Self-Realization of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg's Christology,' *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13 (1986): 207-223.

¹¹ Merold Westphal, 'Hegel, Pannenberg, and Hermeneutics,' *Man and World* 4 (1971): 276, (276-293)

¹² Philip Clayton, 'Anticipation and Theological Method,' in *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques*, ed. by Carl E Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), pp. 122-150.

¹³ See as examples, F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundational Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. 152-153; Jacqui Stewart *Reconstructing Science and Theology in Postmodernity: Pannenberg, Ethics and the Human Sciences* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), esp. 95-97; Stanley Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. 58-60, 72; and Cornelius Buller, *The Unity of Nature and History in Pannenberg's Theology* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), esp. pp 42-45; Kam Ming Wong, *Wolfhart Pannenberg on Human Destiny*, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008) esp. 10-13.

up as recently as 2004¹⁴ and 2009,¹⁵ and even prompting some introductions of Hegel to distance Hegel's thought within Philosophy of Religion from Pannenberg.¹⁶

According to Ian Taylor, this is attributable, in large part, to an assumption of Hegelianism on the part of interpreters. Pannenberg's thought, then, is assessed either with the degree to which he is faithful to Hegel, or to which the interpreter accepts or rejects Hegel. This is understandable, he notes, because Pannenberg does take up Idealist themes and uses similar language, but he does not use them in the same way as Hegel.¹⁷ Yet Taylor does not offer an explanation for why Pannenberg utilizes the terminology common to idealists. Instead of looking to Hegel, or Fichte (as Taylor briefly does), we should instead examine Pannenberg's intellectual relationship with the oft overlooked Schelling, who acts much more clearly as an interlocutor for Pannenberg than any other idealist or existentialist. This will be established in the second chapter, but discussed throughout the remainder of the thesis as well. By grounding Pannenberg's use of history in the work of Schelling, especially the latter's *Spätphilosophie*, we can continue to refine Pannenberg's theology more clearly in the third chapter in opposition to Bultmann's dehistoricization of revelation and theology.

Given Schelling's commitment to examining historical fact as an entry point to philosophy, paired with his commitment to the contingency of creation, we have a broader context for understanding Pannenberg's critique of Bultmann begun in *Revelation as History*, but extended over a series of papers. Pannenberg's own theology of history, as demonstrated in the third

¹⁴ Anselm K. Min, 'The Dialectic of Love: Pannenberg's Hegelian Trinitarianism,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 6:3 (2004), 252-269.

¹⁵ Timothy Bradshaw, *Pannenberg: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: T&T Clark, 2009). Here it is so pervasive that one dust jacket review noted this work could be understood as a robust 'defense of Pannenberg Hegelianism'

¹⁶ Raymond Keith Williamson, *An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1984) 289-292.

¹⁷ Ian Taylor, *Pannenberg on the Triune God*, (London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 19-21. He is especially critical of Min's work on this front.

chapter, is developed in opposition to Bultmann's emphasis on de-historicization. If the revelation of God is identical with God's actions within history, as Pannenberg argues is the case, then revelation must be particular, such as occurs with the Christ event. Thus we may draw the following about Pannenberg's theology of history: if history is God's revelation, then theology is the interpretation of history *as history* in order to better comprehend divine revelation. This leads to an essentially 'bottom up' methodology for approaching doctrines as opposed to the more traditional 'top-down' method utilised in theology, something Pannenberg exemplifies in *Jesus—God and Man*.

By defining theology in these terms, Pannenberg has made theology a question of hermeneutics as it pertains to history. For this reason, the chapter then moves to address Pannenberg's interaction with Wilhelm Dilthey. Pannenberg's own reason for engaging with Dilthey stems from his critique of Bultmann. Bultmann's theological project draws heavily upon Heidegger, as is well known, and Heidegger also addresses the question of history, which includes Heidegger's own reference to Dilthey. Rather than a footnote to Heidegger's project, Pannenberg places a heavier emphasis upon Dilthey, seeking to rehabilitate Dilthey's hermeneutic of history in light of the criticism of Hans Georg Gadamer. Gadamer's 'horizons' requires that an interpreter of history of the sort which Dilthey advocates must be able to have knowledge not only all of human history, but all temporal occurrences that are causally connected to that history from beginning to end. Thus Pannenberg's account addresses questions of eschatology and the very nature of history itself.

Although Pannenberg is attempting to rehabilitate Dilthey's overall scheme, he nevertheless finds he must abandon Dilthey on one point, the very point where Heidegger utilised Dilthey: his distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie*.¹⁸ This becomes Pannenberg's sharpest critique of not only

¹⁸ The distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie* is difficult to convey in English, especially as Heidegger employs the terms. In a summative, but still imprecise, way, one might say that *Historie* refers to the historical facts of history (dates, names, specific occurrences), while *Geschichte* refers to the narrative or story of history, and its link to other aspects of that story, particularly as it relates to and influences *Dasein*. *Historie* just is, while *Geschichte* is brought about and, in turn, brings things about.

Heidegger, but the entire project of dialectical theology.¹⁹ For Pannenberg, the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* is an entirely artificial distinction, and it is nonsense to speak of them as different histories, not to mention the ‘super-histories,’ ‘sub-histories’ and salvation-histories that Pannenberg notes are characteristic of dialectical theology. Instead, all history constitutes a single, unified process. Set in light of Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey, then, this history is also much broader than the common modern meaning for history; history is not just the temporal element of human culture, but encompasses all temporal occurrences in the universe. All of nature, from its very beginning until its end, is historical and thus has a theological element. However, given that Pannenberg’s response must not only address the nature of history, but must also account for the end of history, if it is to be considered complete, Pannenberg’s theology of history must address the eschaton, or end of history.

In chapter four, we examine Pannenberg’s shift in temporal locus of divine action to the end of history, as well as humanity’s relationship to that same end, in order to further sketch Pannenberg’s theology of history. By placing the primary locus of God’s action at ‘the end of history’ and arguing that this locus is present within the course of history, most acutely at the historical event of the resurrection of Jesus, Pannenberg not only offers a possible address to Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey, but also further develops his theology of history in light of divine sovereignty, approaching eschatology from a ‘bottom up’ perspective. As noted, Dilthey’s scheme would require that a comprehensive hermeneutic of history be obtainable from the end of history by a mind that can also comprehend the very beginning of history in order to give the required context for historical events. Further, since God reveals himself *to* humanity from the future, Pannenberg must also provide an anthropology that shows humanity’s relationship with the future in order to incorporate it within his theology of history. Via an examination of Pannenberg’s theological anthropology in this context, chapter four sharpens the discussion of Pannenberg’s theology of history upon the issue of human

¹⁹ For Pannenberg, this includes not only Bultmann, but also, to some extent, Barth, and going back as far as Martin Kähler.

freedom and divine sovereignty. In particular, this end of history is relayed to humanity within the course of history, claims Pannenberg, in that the resurrection constitutes the occurrence of the eschaton in the midst of history, thereby constituting the most complete revelation by God to humanity. All other historical occurrences are only revelatory to the extent that they are considered in light of the resurrection, then. In order to discuss the whole of history, whose end is relayed to humanity at the resurrection, Pannenberg's theology of history requires the incorporation of cosmic history.

The fifth chapter addresses the issue of cosmic history. If divine revelation *is* history, as Pannenberg states, and history necessarily includes cosmic history, then the manner we speak of cosmic history must be theological in tone. By addressing cosmic history in this way, this chapter also offers a way to describe divine action from the future as sovereign, without that action compromising the contingency, and with it freedom, of human agents. I do so through restoring, sharpening, and applying Pannenberg's use of the 'field' concept. By examining field theory in light of its philosophical background and by expanding Pannenberg's own use of field, the thesis gives an account of divine action and then places that within the context of a theology of history. Problematically, Pannenberg is unwilling to state that his use of field amounts to 'mere metaphor,' yet he also does not want to equate the field with the Spirit of God. Thus, a key task of the sixth chapter is to resolve this problem.

For Pannenberg, the field represents a scientific description of non-local and thus non-material causal action upon material objects. Pannenberg is not concerned with the field, but the causal action *of* the field. Similarly, Pannenberg is less concerned with describing the exact nature of the Spirit, at least in the context of field, as he is with describing the way in which Spirit, as non-material, exerts a causal influence upon the material world. The point of comparison is not between the ontologies of 'Spirit' and 'Field' as such, but between the causal influence of 'Spirit' and 'Field.' In other words, the causation of the non-material field can help us to explain the causation of non-

material Spirit upon the physical world.²⁰ Given that this is the case, it then becomes possible to speak about divine causal interaction on a cosmic scale, and thus begin to more fully develop a theology of history. Given the discussion of the Spirit, in relation to ‘field,’ it is also necessary to begin speaking of the Spirit in relation to the Trinity in its entirety.

Since God interacts within history via the field, a type of causation that, irrespective of temporal placement of the cause, I will establish is contingent in the terms established by Scotus in chapter one, we are able to speak of all of theology as necessarily historical, understood in the broad sense of history established in chapter three. By placing the temporal locus of this cause at the end of history, to which humanity is oriented, as argued in the fourth chapter, the use of field, in the final chapter, is able to give an account for the mechanics of a theology of history. This final chapter takes the field concept and places it in the context of panentheism, a move Pannenberg was openly reluctant to make. The way in which this move is made, however, respects the reasons behind Pannenberg’s reluctance by maintaining a distinction between Creator and created, while still taking the necessary steps to describe human causal action as occurring with no distance between people and God. The manner of the Spirit’s manifestation, the primary form of causation derived from field, is in relation to temporal events. God grounds the present moment from the manifestation of himself out of the defined future that exists just beyond the horizon of our vision, yet it is a continuous creation, with no set end. Thus, while the end of history is defined, as described in chapter four, meaning that God is sovereign, it comes about as a result of the contingent/free actions of humans, upon whom ‘God has made himself dependent.’ The defined end, then, is always just beyond our temporal experience, but the intervening future (between now and that day) is entirely undefined. Time, in this pattern, is understood in a multidimensional temporal context, a concept introduced in chapter four, referenced throughout, and receiving fuller treatment in connection with theology in the concluding

²⁰ The exact logic of this is detailed in the fifth chapter.

chapter. Through all of this, God partners with humanity such God is sovereign only insofar as humans freely choose to see him as sovereign.

The thesis contributes to general scholarship in a few different ways. First, it gives a description of Pannenberg's theology as a single, unified project, understood as a theology of history, thus offering a needed corrective to the current literature. It does so, in part, by highlighting the long-term impact of Pannenberg's work with Duns Scotus and Schelling, whose influence upon Pannenberg has been ignored in the literature. It also expands upon Pannenberg's use of field alleviating the unresolved problems present within his use of the field concept in the process by sharpening Pannenberg's use of it, and extending that use in light of developments in contemporary physics, especially as concerns the understanding of time. By providing the framework for Pannenberg's theology of history in this way, in particular with reference to field and contingency, the thesis also provides a new potential resolution to the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTINGENCY AND HISTORY IN WOLFHART PANNENBERG'S THEOLOGY

In developing a theology of history in line with Wolfhart Pannenberg's theological writing, we must first look to the foundation of that theology of history. For Pannenberg, this is contingency, as defined by Scotus. Helpfully for our purposes, contingency is also a fundamental aspect of human freedom and divine sovereignty. If we are to argue that creation in general, and human beings in particular, are free, we must argue that humans both act contingently and that they exert a causal influence upon the world. God is sovereign; likewise, if he²¹ exerts a causal influence upon the world and acts contingently, with the added condition that God is able to ensure his intended end. Finally, contingency gives us an avenue to reframe the discussion regarding field theory that will occur in earnest beginning in chapter five, as a micro-theory as opposed to a macro-theory (one concerned with individual actions as opposed to the big picture), which will prove necessary to resolve the aforementioned tension.

This chapter will look at contingency generally, seeking both to define the concept and to give some of the relevant historical background that accompanies it. To do so, the chapter will begin with the well-known account of contingency presented by Gottfried Leibniz. It will then give the earlier, contrasting view of contingency found in John Duns Scotus in more detail, as well as briefly describe Pannenberg's earliest interaction with Scotist contingency. In so doing, I will show that Pannenberg's theology of history is

²¹ In keeping with tradition, masculine pronouns will be applied to God throughout this thesis. This is not meant to identify God as gendered.

founded upon Scotist contingency, an idea entirely neglected in the secondary literature concerning Pannenberg. Following that, the scientific usage of the concept of contingency, partly based on Scotus, will be outlined to frame our eventual discussion of field theory, in chapter five, before moving to a brief description of causal systems and the role of contingency within these systems. This will set up the necessary framework for a theology of history, examined in the rest of the thesis, and its connection to the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

1 The Leibnizian Tradition

The philosophical understanding of contingency is most often associated with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz argued that there were two types of truth in the universe: necessary truths and contingent truths.²² For the most part, Leibniz understood necessary truths to be self-evident or analytic truths, like mathematical or logical truths, while contingent truths describe all other truth claims, which would largely be comprised of empirical claims.²³ A more precise definition for contingency in Leibnizian terms would be to say that a statement is contingent ‘if and only if it is logically possible that it be true and also logically possible that it be false.’²⁴ The term ‘contingent’ can then be extended to events and beings about which contingent statements are made.²⁵ For Leibniz, the physical existence of each individual object in the universe as it currently is contingent in that existence, while certain truths, such as mathematical truths (i.e., $2+2=4$) are necessary (non-contingent).

²² Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “On Necessity and Contingency (Letter to Coste, 1707)” in *Leibniz: Selections*, ed. Philip W. Weiner (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 480.

²³ Ibid. This includes statements regarding numbers in abstract, such as $1+1=2$. Leibniz includes the existence of God in this claim, which indicates an acceptance of some form of the ontological argument for God’s existence; it should be noted that Leibniz does not use the terms ‘analytic’ or ‘empirical,’ and that contingent truth claims could extend beyond empirical claims to metaphysical claims.

²⁴ W. S. Anglin, *Free Will and the Christian Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 29.

²⁵ Ibid., 30.

Leibniz most frequently speaks about contingency by employing the terminology of 'possible worlds.' Leibniz argued that an individual's continued future existence is contingent, and that the entirety of each individual's existence, including past existence, is contingent since there exists a possible world where none of the individual's prior actions existed nor even the individual exists.²⁶

Leibniz went on to argue that the entire physical universe is also contingent. It is not necessary that God chose to create the present universe in the manner that he did; therefore, it is possible that there could have been a universe that is different from ours in which our world did not exist. It follows that, since our universe is contingent, its existence is dependent upon God's choice to create it. As a result, contingency has often come to mean 'dependent upon.'²⁷ However, it is a mistake to equate contingency with dependency, and as much of this thesis will demonstrate, it is possible to conceive of a form of contingency that does not entail dependency.²⁸ Although God's decision to create this particular universe is a contingent one in that it is possible that God could have chosen to create a different universe or none at all, it is conceivable that creation was, nevertheless, created by God to be independent from God, in some sense; thus it can be considered contingent without necessarily being dependent.²⁹ Notwithstanding the confusion of contingency with dependence, contingency in philosophical discourse is most often spoken of in Leibniz's terms: that a contingent event or object is

²⁶ Leibniz, 'On Necessity and Contingency,' 481.

²⁷ See, for instance, Mark William Worthing, *God, Creation, and Contemporary Physics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), where contingency is only understood in the sense of dependency; 84, 89, 102-109. Of course this does not mean that this is a valid definition of contingency, only to note that contingency is used in this way.

²⁸ As will be demonstrated in this chapter, scientific use distinguishes between dependence, contingency (meaning non-determined) and stochastic (meaning uncaused or random), and while many argue that contingency implies a stochastic nature/event, this is by no means a settled question.

²⁹ David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 86-87.

something for whose occurrence it is possible both to have occurred or existed and to not have occurred or existed.

Pannenberg, who freely employs the concept of contingency, questions the validity of understanding contingency in terms of Leibnizian 'possible worlds,' and argues that the past is non-contingent, which would necessitate abandoning Leibnizian concepts of 'possible worlds.' This is in part due to the nature of causation and history as understood by Pannenberg. The present world is a result of past events, and present reactions to those past events. The past, in large part, causes the present. If the present is one of many 'possible worlds' then the past, which causes it, would also be one of many 'possible worlds.' If, however, once the past occurs it is no longer contingent, then there does not exist a multitude of 'possible worlds' at present. It is, perhaps, conceivable to speak of 'possible worlds' in the sense of future possible worlds, on Pannenberg's scheme, but this is clearly not the way in which Leibniz employs the terminology. The idea of a non-contingent past will be developed later in this chapter.

It bears mentioning, as well, that Leibniz is not the first to put forth and develop contingency as a concept. Rather, the concept has roots reaching back at least to Aristotle, or even the debate between Parmenides and Heraclitus. Pannenberg's own interest with contingency is grounded in the philosophical theology of John Duns Scotus, who modified and developed the concept of contingency from Aristotle.³⁰ Considering Pannenberg's doctoral work on Scotus featured a significant discussion on contingency, it is a small logical step to assume Pannenberg's later use of contingency reflected some of the influence of Scotus, especially when one considers the remarkably similar position regarding contingency that Pannenberg has to Scotus.

³⁰ Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), x; Calvin G. Normore, 'Duns Scotus's Modal Theory,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129.

2 John Duns Scotus on Contingency

2.1 Contingency as Power to Act

In his attempt to reconcile the concept of divine foreknowledge with a libertarian concept of human freedom³¹ and, subsequently, moral responsibility, John Duns Scotus rejected the Aristotelian notion of contingency, which was dominant in Scotus's time, as inadequate. Instead, he put forth a new conception of contingency that allows for a broader discussion of volition and freedom, which, according to Antoine Vos, is currently considered the most basic understanding of contingency as a concept distinct from mutability.³² One of Scotus's primary goals was to arrive at an account of divine foreknowledge that did not negate human freedom and took the reality of God's involvement in history seriously. However, Scotus's argument also yielded an ontological claim about the universe that is vital to the present investigation: the universe's existence is contingent, not merely in the future, but at the present as well.³³ In order to best understand how contingency functions as a philosophical concept from its early history, it is best to understand it in terms, initially, of motion. This will prove particularly useful in chapter five when early field theory is also discussed in terms of motion or action (action-at-a-distance).

Prior to Scotus, a form of 'necessitarianism,' rooted in Parmenides and reworked by Aristotle, had been the dominant way to conceive of motion (action) in the universe. Parmenides argued for a stability of existence and truth over time, as opposed to Heraclitus's concept of flux. What this meant, for Parmenides, was that the universe was static and objects could only exist

³¹ Scotus rejects the Aristotelian concept of freedom, which Scotus labels a 'lowly freedom,' in favor of a freedom in line with synchronic contingency as explained in the rest of this section (see also Scotus, *Lectura II*, d. 25; Vat. 19.229-263, esp. paragraphs 32-41). The standard reference is the Vatican edition *Opera omnia studio et cura Commissionis Scotisticae ad fidem codicum edita praeside Carolo Balic*, Vatican City: Typis Polygottis Vaticanis, 1950 (vol. 19).

³² Antoine Vos Jaczn., H. Veldhuis et al., "Introduction," in John Duns Scotus, *Contingency and Freedom: Lectura I 39*, introduction, translation, and commentary by A. Vos Jaczn., H. Veldhuis, A. H. Looman-Graaskamp, E. Dekker, N. W. Den Bok (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 18-19.

³³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Die Prädestination des Duns Skotus: im Zusammenhang der Scholastischen Lehrentwicklung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1954), 33-44.

necessarily. This ‘radical necessitarianism’ was modified by Aristotle who sought to account for the possibility of change without adopting the ‘flux’ of Heraclitus. As a result, Aristotle’s description of contingency became identical with mutability. This has been described by Antoine Vos, and many others, as ‘diachronic contingency,’ meaning that change, evidence of the passage of time, was the marker of contingency, in what might be considered a predecessor to the second law of thermodynamics (e.g., by identifying change/Aristotelian contingency with time).³⁴

In contrast to this determined mutability, Scotus presents the first description of contingency in line with modern definitions of the term, which Vos labels ‘synchronic contingency,’ and which has also been called ‘synchronic picture of modality’ and, by Calvin Normore, the ‘doctrine of the contingency of the present.’³⁵ These terms highlight the principle distinction. Aristotelian, or ‘diachronic contingency’ assumes that if there is a change over time, even one that necessarily occurs, an object is contingent. For instance, if we say that at one point in time, T , object x had property A (Ax), and at some other point in time, not T ($\neg T$), object x does not have property A , even if this is a necessary transition, on the Aristotelian scheme property A is contingent with respect to object x . This concept of contingency requires that there be two different times one where x has A and one where it does not ($\neg A$). We can therefore summarise Aristotelian or diachronic contingency in this way: Any property A is contingent with respect to object x only if conditions 1) and 2) are met. Or:

- 1) At time T , object x has A [$T(Ax)$]
 - 2) At some other time $\neg T$, object x does not have A [$\neg T(\neg Ax)$]
 - 3) Therefore, (\therefore) A is contingent with respect to x [$\text{Cont}(Ax)$] Or
- $$\text{Cont}(Ax) \leftrightarrow T(Ax) \wedge \neg T(\neg Ax)$$

Scotus, however, introduces the terminology of possibility. Using the same syllogism, the Scotist concept of contingency argues that if it is possible

³⁴ Vos, ‘Introduction,’ 20-24.

³⁵ Vos, ‘Introduction,’ 26. Normore, ‘Scotus’ Modal Theory,’ 130.

for object x to have A at time T and if it is also possible for object x to not have property A at the same time T , then, and only then, can we consider property A to be contingent with respect to x . We can also write it this way: Property A is contingent with respect to x only if conditions 1) and 2) are met

- 1) At time T , it is possible for object x to have A [$T(x \diamond A)$]
- 2) At time T , it is possible for object x to not have A [$T(x \diamond \neg A)$]
- 3) Therefore, (\therefore) A is contingent with respect to x . [$\text{Cont}(Ax)$] Or

$$\text{Cont}(Ax) \leftrightarrow T(x \diamond A \wedge x \diamond \neg A)$$

To say something is contingent for Scotus is to argue that it could have been otherwise, or, more precisely, that it is ‘possible to be and not to be’ at any particular time.³⁶

This language of possibility is the core meaning of contingency. If contingency were merely indeterminacy, that would not be particularly helpful. We are actually looking at the power to affect the world or generate change. Within the domain of physics, with which this thesis will deal more explicitly via the field concept in chapter five, indeterminacy is fully at work in many theories of quantum mechanics. However, quantum indeterminacy, which functions at the subatomic level, fails to yield purpose or intention. For the later dialogue with contemporary physics to be meaningful in theological discussions related to personhood and freedom, the concept of indeterminacy must include intent or purpose if we are to speak meaningfully about God’s creative action without it being capricious action, and to speak of human action as subject to moral judgment. Scotus’s discussion of ethics and culpability is instructive here.

In his *God and Creatures: The Quolibetal Questions*, Scotus takes up, as question eighteen, whether morality is based upon external or internal

³⁶ Hester Goodenough Gelber, *It Could have been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology at Oxford, 1300-1350* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 153-154; Vos, ‘Introduction,’ 6.

action. Scotus begins by noting that questions of culpability or laudability of an act require one to speak of power. For Scotus, 'it is not enough that the agent have the ability to adjudicate the appropriateness of his acts. He must actually pass judgment upon the act and carry it out in accord with that judgment.'³⁷ In other words, the degree to which an act is morally laudable or culpable is judged such by the extent to which the will is engaged. Thus a will, or motivation, that acts upon a determination between right and wrong as a result of prior conditioning is less morally praiseworthy or blameworthy than the will that makes the determination itself. The most perfect will, that is the one most laudable, for Scotus is one that acts 'indeterminately.' Further, following Scotus's interpretation of Augustine, culpability may only truly be imputed to the will that acts 'in its power indeterminately.'³⁸

For Scotus, in particular, an action is most laudable if an agent truly had the power to perform a morally blameworthy act and, as an exercise of truly unencumbered will chose to do the morally praiseworthy action. If the decision to choose a morally praiseworthy or blameworthy act was the result of a causal influence on the agent, then the agent is only praised or blamed to the extent that the agent acted under freedom and had the ability to do otherwise. The remaining moral value is passed up 'the whole causal chain leading up to the will,' that initially exercises the decisive contingent freedom.³⁹ This becomes especially pertinent when we turn more explicitly to the question of God's power to act. If we admit Anselm's claim that God is understood to be 'that than which no greater can be conceived,' and setting aside his questionable logical leap from conception to actuality, then God who creates out of some internal drive performs a less praiseworthy action than God who creates through self-determination beyond mere adjudication. A classical understanding of benevolent omnipotence, then, requires that God act

³⁷ John Duns Scotus, 'Question 18' of *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions*, translated by Felix Alluntis and Allan B Wolter, excerpt in *Readings in Medieval Philosophy* ed by Andrew B Schoedinger, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 178.

³⁸ Ibid., 180.

³⁹ Ibid., 181-182.

contingently in the creation of the world. The real question becomes, then, whether we are able to speak of contingent action as non-random, for again it follows that a God who creates with intent is better than one who creates capriciously.

As demonstrated in the above discussion on moral value, for Scotus contingency has less to do with ontology, as it did for Leibniz, and more to do with causation.⁴⁰ Since it is causation with which we are concerned, and not only ontology, the issue of ability or power is introduced. Taking the syllogism we used above, if time T were in the future, then any concept of freedom would require that at some future point object x is capable of either having property A and not having property A :

- 1) At time that has not yet occurred, $\diamond T$, it is a real possibility that x has property A
- 2) At time that has not yet occurred, $\diamond T$, it is a real possibility that x does not have property A ; ($\neg A$).
- 3) Therefore, (\therefore) A is contingent with respect to x at time, T or $\text{Cont}(Ax) \leftrightarrow \diamond T(x \diamond A \wedge x \diamond \neg A)$
- 4) We now add the condition that property A is contingent relative to x at time T if and only if the possession or non-possession of property A by object x is the result of contingent cause(s), C . Yielding the more robust formulation:

$$T[\text{Cont}(Ax)] \leftrightarrow [\diamond T(x \diamond A \wedge x \diamond \neg A)] \wedge T([\text{Cont}(C) \rightarrow (Ax)] \oplus [\text{Cont}(C) \rightarrow (\neg Ax)])^{41}$$

The result of such a line of argument for Scotus was that he could argue that God, who for Scotus is immutable, can nevertheless perform contingent causal actions since a contingent act does not require a change in the causal agent, so long as it produces a contingent effect.⁴² While, for

⁴⁰ John Duns Scotus, 'The Existence of God,' in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Allan Wolter (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 54-55.

⁴¹ The distinction between potential time ($\diamond T$) and actual time (T) is discussed below. The formulation is read: A is a property had by x contingently at (actual) time T if and only if at potential (future) time T , object x potentially has property A and object x potentially does not have property A ; and at (actual) time T either contingent cause C causes A with respect x or contingent cause C causes x to not have property A , but not both.

⁴² Vos, 'Introduction,' 26.

Scotus, this meant he could argue that an immutable God has foreknowledge of the contingent future, thus in his mind resolving the conflict between foreknowledge and human free will, Scotus's argument allows this only if one assumes that the world is, in fact, contingent. In other words, he does not prove the contingency of the world, he only demonstrates that it is possible for the world to be conceived of as contingent and, if his definition of contingency is accepted, that God can remain immutable, knowing the future, without infringing upon the contingency of creation. His concept of contingency had further implications as well.⁴³ Scotus argued that, for contingency to be genuine, it must include the idea of *simultaneous* possibility; future possibility alone is inadequate.⁴⁴ In order to explain Scotus's concept of simultaneous possibility, what has been labelled above the 'contingency of the present,' we must first briefly address his use of modes of being.

For much of the discussion of contingency in Scotus to be sensible, there must be a clear distinction between potential and actual as the two primary *modes of being*. The potential, despite not being actual, has a genuine mode of being (so, in the above, $\langle \rangle T$ is genuine if not yet actual, or is actual only in the sense of being possible). The Aristotelian scheme, however, denies that the potential mode of being can become an actual present; there is no talk of possibility. For Scotus, though, if a property, object or event exists only as a logical possibility, but cannot become actualised, then it is not genuinely a possible course of action and, therefore, is not free.⁴⁵

Scotus's simultaneous contingency means that object x has the possibility of having property A or of not having property A when time T becomes actual, even though only one option (A or $\neg A$) is actualised at time T . The result of this is that there are two modes of being, *potential* and *actual*, and both have a genuine existence, though not a *material* existence. These two modes of being or 'instances of nature' are termed 'prior' and 'posterior' by

⁴³ Wolter, *Philosophical Theology*, 185; Pannenberg, *Die Prädestination*, 54-59, 116-119.

⁴⁴ Scotus, *Contingency and Freedom*, 116 (§ 50).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 118 (§ 51).

Scotus. Two contradictory actions or ontologies, such as A and $\sim A$ both exist ‘priorly,’ but, after the actualisation of a single option at time T , only one exists ‘posteriorly’ for object or action x . What is particularly striking about Scotus’s description of modes of being is that when moment T is present, *both* properties A or $\sim A$ exist ‘priorly.’⁴⁶ It is only following the moment of actualisation that one’s mode of being becomes posterior and the other option merely has the past existence as a ‘prior’ mode of being. The potential contradiction is solved, for Scotus, in that the present exists without duration.

In relation to potentiality, the pressing issue is what the implications of synchronic contingency are for causal action. Scotus argues that, for actions to be free, they must be contingent, though the converse does not necessarily hold.⁴⁷ A person is free, only if the person has the power in the future and at the present to perform any one of two or more mutually exclusive actions. In Scotus’s words, contingent action is the freedom or power to actualise any potential prior action into a posterior action. If contingency is tied to potential, and thus power, then God, who is omnipotent, must act contingently. In the time following Scotus, this led some Christian sects to argue that all of God’s actions, until they have occurred, are contingent.⁴⁸

There are two further implications to Scotus’s definition of contingency that I will introduce now, but address in more detail in subsequent chapters. First, since contingency is only associated with the present and future for Scotus, and the present reality of contingency is somewhat contentious, it is fair to say that the future is the primary mode of time associated with contingency. If this is the case and contingency is understood as ability to act, then the place of God’s omnipotence is in the future. Second, this could lead, as Pannenberg cautions in his doctoral dissertation, to the assertion that God, who always acts contingently, does not have an actual

⁴⁶ Normore, ‘Scotus’s Modal Theory,’ 134-135.

⁴⁷ Contingency might be termed a necessary, but not sufficient, criterion for freedom

⁴⁸ Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*, 203-204; 220-223.

existence, but only a potential one.⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Pannenberg later accepts a modified version of this possibility, as seen in *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, to argue not only that God acts primarily from the future but also that, in some sense at least, ‘God does not yet exist.’ Both of these claims, and their implications for our understanding of contingency, will be explored in chapters three and four.

To perform a contingent act means both to have the power to do that act and simultaneously to have power at that time to instead do a mutually exclusive act, though in reality only actualising one such act. This is one reason Scotus can separate mutability from contingency. Scotus, still accepting the immutability of God, asserts that God can nevertheless act contingently, since contingent action is, for Scotus, connected with events or acts, and not with ontology. That is, contingency is a question of causal activity, not a question of being (or at least not only a question of being), as it would later be understood in Leibniz. Thus God is perfect, according to ancient and medieval concepts of perfection that entail immutability, and powerful. God and his nature can be considered necessary, while his actions could still be described contingently. The idea of contingent action as power has further implications for cause and effect, which can be derived from an understanding of creation as contingent.⁵⁰

2.2 Cause and Effect with Scotus’s Contingency

While the problem of divine foreknowledge is behind Scotus’s engagement with contingency, one of the goals of this thesis entails exploring the relation of contingency to cause and effect, connecting it to history and freedom.⁵¹ As mentioned, Scotus argued convincingly that the actions of God are contingent, as highlighted in a discussion of God’s act of creation.

⁴⁹ Pannenberg, *Die Prädestination*, 136-138.

⁵⁰ Creation as contingent will be examined toward the end of the chapter.

⁵¹ According to some, Scotus never answers the ‘how’ question. So Vos et al., ‘Introduction,’ 19-20.

According to Scotus, and in accordance with prevailing medieval philosophy, to say that the act of creation was necessary for God would imply a certain lack in God, because if God must necessarily create, then God is bound. On the other hand, if God creates freely, then his creative act must be viewed as contingent. God's ability to perform action, his power, is not dependent upon the existence of the universe, but God's contingent act is necessary for the universe's existence; therefore, the universe is dependent upon God's free, or contingent, creative act but not the reverse. According to Scotus scholar Allan Wolter, Scotus's argument was so compelling that, following a series of condemnations in Paris from 1270-1277, French theologians found they could only speak of God's act of creation as a contingent one 'motivated only by his [*God's*] goodness and liberality.'⁵² Scotus would go on to argue that, not only is God's action contingent, but the actions of people were also contingent. The degree to which Scotus was successful in demonstrating this through careful argument rather than just assertion, however, has been questioned.⁵³

The primary reason Scotus gives for contingency is that the non-contingency of creation is incompatible with his understanding of God's perfection. If any aspect of creation is necessary, then all of creation necessarily exists given its causal interconnectedness. Such a scenario would entail God's act of creation is also necessary, since his act of creating is in that line of causes. If that is the case, then God is neither perfect, for He requires something outside himself in creation, nor free, because he is obliged to do something, namely create. Of course, other philosophers, not least among them Hegel, argue that the motivation to create may be both necessary and arise from within God, thus seemingly resolving the tension without requiring that creation be contingent. We might consider this a 'compatibilist' notion of freedom, and with it come all the other concerns connected to compatibilism. These concerns might include the question of whether a person who acts out

⁵² Wolter, *Philosophical Theology*, 285.

⁵³ See Ibid., 185; Vos et al, 'Introduction,' 27-30. What follows is an alternate account for Scotus's reasoning.

of an essential nature could be considered to have performed a praiseworthy action in comparison to a person who chooses to act a certain way when that person could have chosen to act otherwise. This does not require that God divine compatibilism is not preferable, but it does cause us to consider whether a God who acts out of libertarian freedom, in that he could have chosen not to create, is preferable from a philosophical or theological position.

Further, in speaking of the creation of the universe, Hegel's position becomes particularly fraught. For Hegel, it is not that God truly creates *ex nihilo*, but that the Absolute creates out of his own being.⁵⁴ Only in this way does the Absolute act as the grounding of all existence: by distinguishing the finite out of his own infinite being.⁵⁵

While Hegel, and some commentators such as Anselm Min, argue that creation out of God's/the Absolute's own being is in line with creation *ex nihilo*, such a move makes two assumptions. First, it assumes that the infiniteness of God means that there is nowhere that God is not. Second, it assumes that the Thomist idea that God is the 'source of being (*esse*)' means that creation emerges materially from God, rather than understanding it in the sense that Aquinas clearly meant it, that God is the efficient cause of finite existence.⁵⁶ With respect to the first assumption, it should be noted that an infinite entity is not, by virtue of its infinity, present at all places and times. Nevertheless, one might argue that, when speaking of God, clearly he is understood in the biblical tradition to be all encompassing. Nevertheless, in addressing the question of 'where is God?' we might argue that, in the act of creation, rather than pulling finite creation directly from his being, God makes space for the finite creation by removing himself from parts of the universe. God continues to act as the source, into that nothingness, for his creation

⁵⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Begriff der Religion*, in *Hegels Sämtliche Werke* Band XII, ed. by Georg Lasson (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1925), 146-147. (Indeed Hegel redefines *ex nihilo* to mean this)

⁵⁵ Ibid., 147

⁵⁶ See Anselm K Min 'The Trinity and the Incarnation: Hegel and Classical Approaches,' *Journal of Religion*, 66:2 (Apr 1986), 174-175.

without necessarily requiring that creation be taken directly from the being of God. This also, somewhat indirectly, addresses the second objection. Rather than acting as the material source of creation, by making empty space within the universe, there is now an area where God may create out of that same nothingness, rather than from his own being.⁵⁷ As Cyril O'Regan notes, Hegel's notion is not one of *creatio ex nihilo*, but of *creatio ex deo* or creation out of God, and so is distinct from the historic Christian position.⁵⁸ For creation to truly be 'out of nothing,' such a creation must have been brought into being wholly distinct from God, rather than from the being of God. Given that creation would have been made, this requires that creation is not an unbounded, eternal entity. A creation brought forth '*ex nihilo*,' requires at least one bound, God's act of creation, which, even if an atemporal act, would require that creation be contingent, since it was created and did not self-exist, or exist eternally.⁵⁹ The connection between the created world as contingent and God's act of contingently creating is addressed below.

In order to consider creation contingent, every part comprising the whole of creation must likewise be contingent. Thus the whole of creation should be regarded as contingent because, to use Scotus's term, 'every soul' is contingent.⁶⁰ We might summarise it this way: a cause (*c*) is contingent if and only if its effect (*e*) is contingent; and a cause is necessary (Nec) if and only if its effect is necessary:

- 1) An effect is contingent (assume)
- 2) If an effect is contingent, it cannot be necessary (a Tautology)
- 3) If it is not necessary, the cause of the effect could have not occurred (definition of 'necessary')

⁵⁷ Of course, it is best to not consider these as two separate events, but as rather a single, timeless act on the part of God: making space and filling it with finite creation.

⁵⁸ Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 22 et al.

⁵⁹ Even if creation exists in an infinite temporal scheme (has no end and no temporal beginning), it nevertheless is finite in that God created it. This, therefore, requires that creation be understood as contingent by the very definition of contingency on any schema. It especially applies on the Scotist schema since God could have created otherwise or not at all, if God is truly free in the sense of freedom with which this project is concerned.

⁶⁰ Scotus, *Contingency and Freedom*, 94 (§ 37).

- 4) If the cause of the effect could have not occurred, but did in fact occur, the cause is contingent (definition of 'contingency')
- 5) Therefore (\therefore) if an effect is contingent, its cause must be contingent [$\text{Cont}(e) \rightarrow \text{Cont}(c)$] (from 1-4)
- 6) A cause is contingent (assume)
- 7) If a cause is contingent, it could have not occurred, but did in fact occur (definition of 'contingency')
- 8) If a cause does not occur, its effect does not occur (Tautology)
- 9) Given that a cause did occur (from 6), an effect also occurred (Tautology)
- 10) Given that an effect did occur, but could also have not occurred (from 7, 8 and 9), the effect is contingent (true by definition)
- 11) Therefore (\therefore), if a cause is contingent, its effect is also contingent (from 6-10) [$\text{Cont}(c) \rightarrow \text{Cont}(e)$]
- 12) $\therefore \text{Cont}(c) \leftrightarrow \text{Cont}(e)$ (from 5, 11)
- 13) If we take the inverse of 1-12 and replace 'not contingent' with 'necessary' (true by definition) we can yield:
 $\text{Nec}(c) \leftrightarrow \text{Nec}(e)$ ⁶¹

Scotus forms the proof for the contingency of creation alternatively by examining the cause and effect relationship of the act of creation as opposed to the ontological argument provided above. Causes, being either necessary or contingent, produce effects of the same kind. Thus, a necessary cause will produce not only an immediate effect that is likewise necessary, but a series of necessary, and therefore static, causes and effects comprising a single set. Formed as the converse, this would mean that a contingent cause cannot produce a necessary effect. If an effect were necessary/determined, then no single cause in the series of cause and effect could be regarded as contingent because it would necessarily be the case that the cause initially occurred. Therefore, concludes Scotus, if God creates contingently, then the created universe must be contingent in all of its existence.⁶² It should be noted that, given the above discussion of modes of being, Scotus has separated the idea of necessity/determinism from its status as 'fixed.' Something can be 'fixed' or

⁶¹ Scotus does not give a detailed proof, but his argument in *Contingency and Freedom* §§ 37-40 follows this outline.

⁶² Ibid., 102 (§ 41), 126 (§ 54).

actualised as only one real occurrence (among multiple options), but, so long as it was achieved contingently, it remains contingent. This will prove very important in chapters four, five, and six, where the concept will be revisited in the context of the end of history.

Scotus assumes that the human will is not subject to natural laws in the same way that physical reactions are because each act willed by a human stands entirely on its own. It is for this reason that he can claim every human act itself is contingent, or, completely free.⁶³ It is, therefore, a question of the nature of the human will as independent *a priori*, not the nature of human action as free *a priori*, as Wolter had suggested; the latter follows from the former. Scotus can come about this argument in a different way, as well. Since the act of the will originates in a being that is contingent in existence, by virtue of the act of creation, humanity can always make contingent, or free, decisions. This freedom, moving again to Scotus's synchronic contingency, not only exists in the contingent future, but also at the present in an authentic manner.⁶⁴

Scotus not only argues that creatures act contingently, but that, since certain causes and their effects are contingent, the entire relation between cause and effect is contingent.⁶⁵ In other words, an effect does not necessarily follow from a cause prior to the actualisation of either the cause or effect; rather, that just happens to be the case.⁶⁶ According to Calvin Normore, once causal relations are no longer viewed as necessary, 'it does not seem farfetched to suppose not all causal relations involve succession in time.'⁶⁷ While, for Scotus, this provides a way to explain causation on the part of God who acts atemporally from eternity within the created world, this can have much deeper implications involving causal order and, potentially. For our

⁶³ Ibid., 108 (§ 45).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 118 (§ 51).

⁶⁵ Ibid., 184 (§ 91), comment p. 185.

⁶⁶ This is a similar argument to Hume's problem of causation.

⁶⁷ Normore, 'Scotus's Modal Theory,' 134.

purposes, though, this will have greater implications upon the nature of history in light of eternity. Indeed, for Robert John Russell's description of Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity as having 'temporal thickness,' introduced in chapter four and revisited in chapter six, to be sensible in any way, we must understand the contingent nature of causality, without negating its temporal ties. This will also prove particularly important when the discussion turns, in chapter six, toward the temporal application of field with a contingent time frame between now and the as-yet uncreated future intervening between now and the end of history.

Despite Scotus's assertion that the present can be contingent, he nevertheless does not view the past as truly contingent, as elucidated below. Contrary to Vos, although Leibniz would later argue for the contingency of the past, as noted above, Scotus's failure to argue for such a contingency should not be regarded as a limitation on Scotus's thought resulting from the prevailing philosophical commitments of his day.⁶⁸ Instead, Scotus had legitimate reasons for maintaining that, although the future and present are truly contingent, the past is not.

Scotus explicitly states that, once action moves from prior to posterior after actualising at the present, or *nunc*, it is no longer contingent, but necessary.⁶⁹ This will become immensely important as we examine the development of Pannenberg's theology of history in chapter three onward. The reason Scotus had for adopting such a view is his understanding of knowledge and God's will, which, for Scotus, is intimately connected with God's action and ontology, and thus relevant for contingency.⁷⁰ After an event has become actualised, despite having been contingent while it was still present, its

⁶⁸ Vos, 'Introduction,' *Contingency and Freedom*, 21.

⁶⁹ Normore, 'Scotus's Modal Theory,' 131; this has also been described as the 'standard interpretation' of Scotist, as opposed to later Leibnizian contingency. See Edward Buckner and Jack Zupko 'Commentary' in *Duns Scotus on Time and Existence: The Questions on Aristotle's 'De interpretatione'*, transl by Buckner and Zupko (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

⁷⁰ John Duns Scotus, *Lectura I, 40*, in *Duns Scotus on Divine Love : Texts and Commentary on Goodness and Freedom, God and Humans*, transl. and ed. by A. Vos et al (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003). See also, Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

posterior existence is known to have been actualised in a certain way as fact by God. Once God knows that such an event has occurred in a specific way, it is no longer known as an uncreated contingent fact, but as an already-occurred determined fact. Further, God's actions, though from eternity, can only have causal efficacy within the context of time, since cause and effect imply change and change can only occur as a temporal phenomenon.

Scotus began his understanding of contingency, as noted above, with Aristotle. Aristotle argued for a distinction between logical contingency and 'actualized' or 'realized' contingency in *De Caelo*. While Aristotle argued that things may be logically possible, for Aristotle, only the 'actualized' or 'realized' fact exists, and it does so necessarily. The result is that, for Aristotle, synchronic contingency, something which can potentially be and not be, 'is impossible,' only that which *is* the case actually exists.⁷¹ Further, if something were to be truly contingent, in the sense that Scotus seeks, Aristotle would argue that it is unknowable, since it would never become 'actualized' or 'realized.'⁷²

It is, perhaps, for this reason that Scotus, who modifies Aristotle's concept on contingency to allow an actualized present contingency, still holds to the necessity of the past in light of God's knowledge. Scotus is explicit in his description of contingent events changing their character from contingent into necessary, explicitly citing Aristotle to do so, stating 'what has passed into the past necessary.'⁷³ However, there may be additional reasons for this, especially when one considers the distinction between logical modality of contingency, of importance for Aristotle and later Leibniz, against that of actualized or realized contingency, which was substantially more important for Scotus than for Aristotle. According to the Scotist and more broadly medieval Christian view of God, God will always perform the perfect, and

⁷¹ Aristotle, *On the Heavens Book I and II*, ed. and transl. by Stuart Leggatt (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1995, 100-111 (*De Caedo* I.12).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Scotus, *Lectura I*, 40, 133.

therefore complete, action so that, once performed, the action can no longer be otherwise.⁷⁴

What is distinct for Scotus was that events that are now necessary were previously contingent, something Aristotle could not tolerate. As noted, though, this is not a logical distinction, but one connected to freedom and action. Scotus made a distinction, significantly adapted from Aristotle, between ‘modal’ and ‘actual’ existence which suggests a ‘divided truth’ exists concerning the contingency of any statement. There is the truth concerning its logical contingency, its modality, and the truth concerning its relation to the observed world, its actuality. Scotus labelled the combination of the two a ‘composite truth,’ which Scotus acknowledged could indicate a superficial contradiction that is resolved upon closer examination (with a statement that is modally contingent, but actually necessary).⁷⁵ The focus for Scotus is upon the historical occurrence and its possibility within history. On this front, Scotus is much more open to the concept of freedom than Aristotle.

If something is contingent, for Aristotle, and thus subject to change, then one cannot know an absolute truth about it; truth for Aristotle, following Plato before him, was timeless.⁷⁶ This is why, for Scotus, it is so important that past events no longer be considered contingent: God knew them, and such knowledge requires that they be ontologically (or ‘actually’) necessary. If one were to allow for truth claims to be made about ‘actually’ contingent objects or acts, as this thesis does, one could argue that the past is technically contingent, but its truth claims rely upon the free and contingent action of God who exists in a certain way. Yet for Scotus, and indeed as must be the case for us, the question of the existence of God, and further the existence of God with a certain character, namely one that is faithful, is a separate question. Scotus certainly addressed this question, though this was separate from his discussion

⁷⁴ Sylwanowicz, *Contingent Causality*, 228-229; it should be noted that, while Sylwanowicz interacts with Pannenberg’s dissertation, it is as a scholar of Scotus, and not as someone examining Pannenberg’s theological project.

⁷⁵ Scotus, *Lectura I*, 40, 135.

⁷⁶ Mary Beth Ingham and Mechthild Dreyer, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus: An Introduction* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 87-88.

of contingency. Unfortunately Scotus's reasoning is not entirely satisfactory. Nevertheless, we may remedy it, at least in part, by assuming a God who is faithful; doing otherwise would be to introduce a question far too broad to be covered here, and thus the past remains as it is as a function of God's faithfulness, rather than something inherent to the system. While this is technically a contingent past, it is, for our purposes, functionally necessary. Although Pannenberg never directly addresses the ontology of the past, this language of faithfulness on the part of God as the basis for knowledge of the past is certainly resonant with Pannenberg's work.⁷⁷

This distinction between past as functionally determined and present and future as contingent is important for Pannenberg, who gives a significant amount of emphasis to the historical nature of God's past revelation, a topic that will be discussed in the next chapter, and will impact Pannenberg's development of a theology of history. It will also prove important as a foundation for scientific enquiry via Field theory that a Leibnizian model of contingency, which accepts a fully contingent past, would undermine, or at the very least neglect because, for Leibniz, contingency is not bound to temporality as it is for Scotus.⁷⁸

2.3 Contingency and Soteriology

Pannenberg's primary focus at the end of his dissertation on contingency in the philosophical theology of John Duns Scotus was to engage its potential impact upon the Christian doctrine of election. Building upon Scotus's attempt to reconcile foreknowledge and the contingent action of individuals in history, Pannenberg tries to give an account of election and human freedom. Specifically, in his doctoral dissertation, Pannenberg attempts to reconcile the Reformed understanding that God has predestined some for salvation prior to the beginning of time with the Scotist notion that human

⁷⁷ TTN, 37

⁷⁸ As will be emphasised below, scientific inquiry rejects the notion of a contingent past.

persons nevertheless act freely, and thus are responsible for their own moral actions.⁷⁹

Pannenberg concludes his study of Scotus's philosophical theology by claiming that the tension between causality and contingency, and thus between predestination and contingency, is largely resolved in the Formula of Concord. The aspect of the Formula he believes most relevant he summarises in Scotist terms 'Grundlose Prädestination, selbstverschuldete Verwerfung' (gracious election, self-inflicted reprobation).⁸⁰ In effect, Pannenberg concludes that any condemnation is a result of the free will, and that any salvation is from God's grace alone. At least one other instance, where he does return to the question of election, sees Pannenberg make the clarification that election is unto a group or class or persons, and not individuals as individuals. He follows this up with a comment that 'election' itself, treated as a doctrine, requires that theology be in terms 'of history' and its 'most important characteristic..., contingency.'⁸¹ From this, we can see that the concepts of contingency and history, remained important for Pannenberg later on his career.

Returning to contingency, we can see that the Scotist definition of contingency reframed the discussion of contingent action by moving away from strict mutability and emphasised the language of possibility which led, in turn, to ability or power. Since God's decision to create must have been contingent to emphasise that God is both complete in himself and omnipotent, and given Scotus's assumption that human will makes decisions that, despite being influenced by a variety of factors, are nevertheless freely made, Scotus was able to claim that humans, as well as God, may perform contingent action. In turn, this leads to a concept of free will, and, for Scotus as well as for Pannenberg, this contingency allows for genuine moral action on the part of

⁷⁹ The moral dimension to Scotus's argument, though not emphasized by Vos et al., is nevertheless an important motivating factor of his argument toward contingency. See Ingham and Dreyer, *The Philosophical Vision Scotus*, 21-80. For Pannenberg's argument see *Die Prädestinationslehre*, 10-48.

⁸⁰ Pannenberg, *Die Prädestinationslehre*, 149.

⁸¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Human Nature, Election, and History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977, 46-47, quoted from 47.

humanity. Although both Scotus and Pannenberg claim that this means the end of history can be known, and, as will be discussed in chapter four, for Pannenberg already exists, without negating the freedom/contingency of the present and future, this needs to be explicated more. This thesis will explore Pannenberg's extension of this argument, through the framework of his theology of history that eventually leads to a scientific engagement.

In order to engage with scientific discourse, however, it will be helpful to examine the scientific understanding of contingency. In contrast to Leibniz after him, Scotus did not extend contingency to the past, as was noted above. Because of this, the impact of Scotus's concept of synchronic contingency extends beyond theological concerns. Thomas Torrance claims that the contingency introduced by Scotus serves as the foundation for all scientific enquiry.⁸² Ingham and Dreyer go so far as suggest that Scotus's assertion of contingent human action indicated a unique emphasis on the value of the human will, and subsequently the human mind. They suggest this emphasis led to the later development of modern scientific investigation.⁸³

3 Scientific Definition

3.1 Relation to Scotus

Although the scientific understanding of contingency may vary somewhat from the philosophical one, the two are still related.⁸⁴ While Scotist philosophical contingency emphasises the potential of contrary scenarios, scientific contingency is unconcerned with alternative possibilities, considered primarily with already-observed events. As such, one may be tempted to suggest that contingency in scientific terms is simply the antithesis of determinism, but not in the sense of a libertarian free will, however, because scientific investigation, and in particular physics, does not generally deal with

⁸² Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, ix-x.

⁸³ Ingham and Dreyer, *Philosophical Vision*, 126-127.

⁸⁴ Worthing, *God, Creation, and Contemporary Physics*, 89.

volitional subjects. Therefore, scientific contingency is best understood as 'indeterminism,' which will be explicated below.⁸⁵

According to Max Jammer and James Cushing, historians and philosophers of science accept that scientific contingency is based upon Scotus.⁸⁶ Rather than understand it as the antithesis of determinism, some have proposed contingency is better described in terms of 'chance.'⁸⁷ The concept of contingency in science is focused in the study of past events. According to Cushing, and like the description of contingency given by Scotus, contemporary physics assumes that present and future events are contingent, while assuming past events are necessary or determined. Specifically, most quantum theories, and all field theories, accept that, at the time a causal event occurs, the event is entirely contingent. Once it has already occurred, the event, having been observed, ceases to be contingent. This sense of a determined past, that was nevertheless contingent at the time it occurred, is the bedrock for most quantum theories, and all formulations of field theory and quantum field theory.⁸⁸

Another factor to consider in addressing scientific usage of contingency is the notion of independence. When examining an effect that is contingent or was contingent at the time it occurred, it is difficult to isolate a single immediate cause. Rather than attempting to describe the cause-effect relationship in terms of a single independent cause, contemporary science understands that there are multiple causes, particularly within an open

⁸⁵ Max Jammer, *The Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics: The Interpretations of Quantum Mechanics in Historical Perspective* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 56-84.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 80-84; James T. Cushing, *Quantum Mechanics: Historical Contingency and the Copenhagen Hegemony* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 208.

⁸⁷ Cushing, *Quantum Mechanics*, 96.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 96, 174-192; To be fair, scientific theories do not attempt to explain *why* the past is non-contingent, it is merely a requisite function of the scientific method. Observed facts must remain as they were, and the universe must be assumed to operate relatively uniformly, or scientific investigation loses its predictive and explanatory power. In a way, then, it is connected to the Aristotelian idea of truth, which requires a rejection of contingency, as discussed above.

system.⁸⁹ While laboratory experimentation attempts to isolate causes, the result is a closed system that is non-contingent and thus determined. This is useful for understanding cause-effect on one level, but cannot provide a comprehensive description of open systems where most causal interaction occurs. Therefore, a different methodology is needed to examine events outside the laboratory.

3.2 Contingent Causal Systems

In an open system, it is often the case that multiple causes result in a single contingent event. To explain how this occurs, we need to discuss causal systems. Given the Scotist notion that contingent effects are produced by contingent causes, the causal systems we will examine are contingent causal systems. Contingent effects only occur within open systems. A closed system is one in which all variables are known. Since specific causes can be isolated and manipulated in a closed system to produce a desired effect, they are determined. A truly closed system will always produce a known effect. However, the statistical anomalies, particularly those which occur in quantum physics, are the result of observer influence, a phenomenon that illustrates an otherwise closed system is nevertheless influenced by other factors, which the experimenter did not or could not remove (thus the system isn't truly closed).

Karl Popper has gone so far as to suggest that there are no truly closed systems, questioning the concept of causality as defined by older scientific theory. Popper suggests that scientific hypotheses make tentative claims about plausibility of effects, taking into consideration known factors. He advocates a move away from constructive scientific theories, ones that are predictive in a positive sense, toward falsification.⁹⁰ However falsification also requires that the observer has comprehensive knowledge over background forces at work and thus only works in relatively closed systems.

⁸⁹ See David Bohm, *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (London: Routledge, 1957), 1-12.

⁹⁰ Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 3rd English edition, transl. by author (London: Routledge, 2006), 38-40.

There may be other factors, unknown to the observer, that can result in a falsification that is inaccurate. For Popper, no system can be known as closed in the strict sense, and thus we must be content with a tenuous statistical likelihood or scientific corroboration.⁹¹ The final result of this is a description of the universe where its future is indeterminate (i.e., contingent in the Scotist sense), and the various events within the universe exist as the result of contingent causal systems, whose connections can only be known definitively when it is viewed as a whole, an idea to which we will return in chapter three.

4 Introduction to Pannenberg's Idea of Purposed Contingency

Pannenberg holds that a contingent universe does not discount the sense of purpose individuals, their actions and all of creation have. He draws an analogy between contingency and a question being asked. Although the answer to such a question, and even the question itself are contingent, neither the question nor the answer are random, but are asked and answered with a purpose.⁹² For Pannenberg, contingency as mere indeterminacy is inadequate; purpose or intent is also needed to speak of freedom. While indeterminacy is no doubt at work, emphasising the concept of purpose in the midst of contingency reveals that Pannenberg is concerned primarily with volitional activity.

For Pannenberg, there must be purposeful content behind the contingency of the universe, or else knowledge, understanding, and revelation about and within the universe are impossible for finite beings. If purpose were not included in the concept of at least divine contingent action, the universe would be entirely arbitrary. This arbitrary universe would preclude any sense of divine interaction or self-revelation because meaningful action requires purpose. The difficulty is that purposed action and contingent action seem to

⁹¹Ibid., 134-208, 248-281; Karl Popper, *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism*, taken from *Postscript to the Logic of Scientific Discovery*, vol. III, ed. by W. W. Bartley, III (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 68-80.

⁹² Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Toward a Theology of Law,' transl. Dale G. Lasky, *Anglican Theological Review* (vol. 50 no. 4, October 1973), 408-410.

be mutually exclusive, at least if speaking of divine action, since in the act of purposing something the causes are determined—God’s omnipotence means he is able to achieve his ends, which will lead to determined effects.⁹³

While the analogy of a question may be a helpful illustrative tool, when it comes to causal activity, and particularly the casual activity of God, the tension between purpose and contingency is exacerbated. When God acts, Pannenberg implies, God does so with a specific goal in mind. Yet God, being omnipotent, can actually guarantee his goal is met. Indeed, as will be addressed in chapter four, the specific goal of God toward which history is moving is already assured. If God not only acts with a particular goal in mind, but has guaranteed that history will meet that goal at its end, how is it that the universe can be contingent? Even if it is contingent, would this form of contingency harmonize with the sort of freedom with which we are concerned, and that Scotus almost certainly accepted? Prior to answering these questions, let us first see how Pannenberg applies the concepts of contingency within his own theology.

5 Creation and Contingency

5.1 Creatio Ex Nihilo

As noted above, after Scotus, it became commonplace in Christian theology to describe the creation of the world in terms of a ‘contingent’ act. In keeping with this tradition, Pannenberg argues that the very notion of creation means the universe is ontologically contingent in terms that are clearly Scotist. As Pannenberg explains it, if the universe were not contingent, it would be eternal. Contingency, for Pannenberg, only applies to things that are not eternal, that have a time when they are not, whether past or future.⁹⁴ If it is not eternal, and thus contingent, then either it had a beginning, or it has a defined

⁹³ TTN, 21-22.

⁹⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science,’ *Zygon* 23, no. 1 (March 1988): 10-11. Pannenberg uses the term ‘eternal’ to mean having neither a beginning or an end, as becomes apparent later in the paper.

end.⁹⁵ Pannenberg argues that contingency of the universe is typically understood to mean that it had a beginning.

Robert John Russell, in his critique of Pannenberg, disputes the claim that contingency requires finitude, noting that some conceptions of quantum physics, which makes heavy use of contingency, allow for infinite duration.⁹⁶ Pannenberg counters that time need not be understood exclusively as duration, but should be taken in the sense suggested by Einstein as a fourth dimension of space-time. This may get around the problem of infinite duration by suggesting that even an infinite duration would be bounded with respect to the extent of its reach and could nevertheless have finite beginning.⁹⁷ According to such a model, we need only apply solutions to Zeno's paradoxes of motion, which are actually paradoxes of space, that can be found in contemporary calculus-based physics. While space may be infinite (and if time is simply another dimension of space-time it would apply equally to time), this does not mean an infinite, or an infinite division, cannot be broached. Rather it can be taken as one kind of infinity, but one that is nevertheless bounded, and thus finite with a clear start or end. While there are many treatments and solutions to this, perhaps the one done in most painstaking detail, and which accounts for the nature of temporal infinities the best, is the book-length treatment of the subject by Adolf Grünbaum.⁹⁸ A bounded infinity, particularly of the kind Russell references, can have beginning and end.

Russell also misrepresents Pannenberg's position, which does not argue from a strictly scientific paradigm, but suggests that understanding the world as contingently created is compatible with science and is required by the

⁹⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 41; (Hereafter IST). This 'beginning' need not be a temporal beginning. Rather it is a declaration of some sort of limit to existence.

⁹⁶ Robert John Russell, 'Contingency in Physics and Cosmology: A Critique of the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,' *Zygon* 23, no. 1 (March, 1988): 28.

⁹⁷ Pannenberg, 'Doctrine of Creation,' 11-13.

⁹⁸ Adolf Grünbaum, *Modern Science and Zeno's Paradoxes* (Middleton, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1967).

theological concept of *creatio ex nihilo*.⁹⁹ Pannenberg is not arguing primarily from scientific principles for proof of contingency, but attempting to argue that the idea of a contingent universe as used in philosophical and theological discourse does not conflict with scientific principles. For our purposes, let us assume that such a doctrine of contingent creation supports a beginning to the world.

As previously noted, if the world was not created contingently, then God would not be perfect as the necessity of creation implies a lack in God, according to Scotus. Pannenberg uses terminology similar to Scotus by arguing that a God who cannot create contingently would be dependent on the world, which would mean God is 'a needy and dependent being.' Inversely, understanding creation to be contingent and somehow dependent upon God means that the act of *creatio ex nihilo* could only have been performed as a completely free act not motivated from outside of God.¹⁰⁰ From a theological perspective, we should argue that, while the creation of the world is contingent, it is not random.

In line with his earlier assertion, Pannenberg maintains that 'the decision to create the world is certainly not arbitrary; the act of creation is not in that sense contingent.'¹⁰¹ If it were, then a purposeless, contingent creation could have resulted in 'other effects,' than the creation of the world 'or even none at all.'¹⁰² As mentioned, Pannenberg holds the ideas of contingency and purpose in tension, despite their seeming exclusivity.

Pannenberg holds this tension by linking the concepts of purpose and contingency together through love. God's love for the uncreated world

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8; as noted above, if the universe had a beginning it is not eternal and must be understood as contingently created, even if it is temporally infinite.

¹⁰⁰ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1, 6, 9; (Hereafter ST2)

¹⁰¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Theological Appropriation of Scientific Understandings: Response to Hefner, Wicken, Eaves, and Tipler,' *Zygon* 24, no. 2 (June 1989): 269.

¹⁰² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 369. (Hereafter ST1)

motivates him to actualise its *priori*¹⁰³ existence. Love, as God's motivation, and entirely originated from within God's own being, necessarily produces a 'contingent effect as creative power.' If love is the motivating factor for God's creative act, and it produces contingent effects, then God's entire relation to the world can only be characterised as loving. If this were not the case, then creation would either fail to be truly contingent, or would fail to have purpose.¹⁰⁴

In suggesting the motivation for creating is love, Pannenberg characterises God's relation to the world in certain key ways, first that 'God's creative action is oriented wholly to creatures. They are both the object and goal of creation.'¹⁰⁵ Here, echoing Kant, Pannenberg extends this claim to mean that, as a result of God's creative action in love 'no creature is merely a means' for God's end.¹⁰⁶ If this is indeed the case, then love not only describes God's relation to the world at the initial act of creation, but suggests a continued interaction between God and creature, as well as something about the eschatological goal of all creation, which will be connected to field toward the end of this thesis.

As addressed in more detail below, for God to act contingently and purposefully, without overwhelming the freedom of creatures, God must continually interact with creation to bring about this purpose.¹⁰⁷ To avoid suggesting there is a lack in God, God's action must have as its goal a purpose that originates within God, as has been discussed above. In order for God's actions to be both contingent and purposed the purpose cannot have been attained until the end of the series. For Pannenberg, this purpose is found only at the end of history, or the eschaton and is, as noted, his eternal self.

¹⁰³ I am using the Scotist terminology introduced earlier in the chapter.

¹⁰⁴ Pannenberg, 'Theology of Law,' 406.

¹⁰⁵ ST2, 57.

¹⁰⁶ ST2, 7.

¹⁰⁷ This process of 'continuous creation' is discussed in the next section.

Before progressing too much further, a note should be said concerning Hegel, especially considering the close association many draw between Hegel and Pannenberg, as mentioned in the introduction. It is true that Hegel also posits that creation comes out of love. In line with most philosophical interpretations *creatio ex nihilo* for Hegel means, essentially, *creatio ex Deo*.¹⁰⁸ This, in and of itself, does not exclude Hegel from the conversation. Indeed some of the statements regarding the necessity of creation, understood in proper context, likewise do not exclude Hegel.¹⁰⁹ Rather, it is the way in which Hegel employs an *ex Deo* creation that becomes problematic for our purposes. In short, while God certainly has existence beyond that of finite creation, for Hegel creation is necessarily wholly contained and identical with the Absolute; even while it is differentiated, creation is an internal self-differentiation that remains wholly contained within the Absolute.¹¹⁰ This together with Hegel's more complicated relationship with history, understood as already complete within the Absolute, are enough to distinguish Hegel's understanding from the of Scotus, Schelling and Pannenberg.¹¹¹ Given that numerous other philosophers and theologians have looked to 'love' as a motivation for God's creation, and Pannenberg's other disagreements with

¹⁰⁸ Multiple places, but see, for instance Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Peter C Hodgson, transl. by R. F. Brown et al., vol 3, (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 200-201 (German 133-134).

¹⁰⁹ As Hodgson helpfully notes, in the introduction to vol I of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the footnote often attributed to Hegel that 'Without the world, God is not God' was likely added to Hegel's notes by a later editor and not original to Hegel. See, *ibid.*, vol 1 (1984), p. 43-44. Even still, the language of necessity in connection to creation might be forgiven as a distinction between necessarily derived from nature, and an actual constraint, with Hegel emphasizing that God could have still chosen not to create.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 292-295 (German 196-199).

¹¹¹ To be sure, Schelling, in particular, exhibits many similar themes, and is the probable source of the spurious quote of 'without the world God is not God' (as noted in the next chapter), which is understandable considering their close relationship. However, Schelling later rejects the idea of history as completed in the Absolute, and Pannenberg, while he argues for an end, nevertheless argues that history is incomplete. Further, while the panentheism of Hegel argues that God is more than creation, Pannenberg's approach argues that while there is overlap between God and creation, in the same way that God exists outside of creation, so also must creation be understood as existing outside of God.

Hegel, it would be prudent to look to these other thinkers, in particular Scotus and Schelling, and to a lesser degree Kant (as noted above), in our discussion.

Second, to say God creates out of love also says something about the freedom of creation. For Pannenberg, since God creates freely in love, his creation will also be capable of contingent and purposed action. Pannenberg argues this on the basis of what he understands creation in love to mean. In particular, he claims that, by creating in love, and subsequently viewing his creation as the object and goal of his loving creative act, the expression of God's love can be observed in the presence of creation's free actions.¹¹² In different terms, creation exists contingently because God loves it priorly.

Because creation is an expression of God's love, and creatures are not merely a means for God's ends, created beings must exist as capable of contingent action themselves. In order for creatures to exist as something other than merely a means, rational creatures must be able to move toward their own ends. The ability to actualise a distinct end requires contingency and freedom. Creation is only an expression of God's love, then, so far as it is free.¹¹³ In this way, Pannenberg argues that creaturely freedom naturally flows out from God's act of a contingent creation done in love.¹¹⁴

Third, if God creates from a position of love to allow a free creation that moves toward a goal, then the doctrine of *creatio continua* follows.¹¹⁵ For Pannenberg, the doctrine of continuous creation declares that 'the freedom of divine origin of the world on the one hand and God's holding fast to his creation on the other belong together.' Pannenberg understands these two actions of God, *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*, to be linked by that same motivation of love.¹¹⁶

¹¹² ST2, 20-21.

¹¹³ ST2, 20; Pannenberg, 'Doctrine of Creation,' 9.

¹¹⁴ This is contrary to Cornelius P. Venema, 'History, Human Freedom and the Idea of God in the Theology of Wulfhart Pannenberg,' *Calvin Theological Journal* 17, no. 1 (April 1982): 53-77, but follows from Pannenberg's argument in 'Doctrine of Creation.'

¹¹⁵ Pannenberg, 'Doctrine of Creation,' 8.

¹¹⁶ ST2., 19.

5.2 Creatio Continua

‘Continuous creation’ for Pannenberg should be understood primarily in terms of faithfulness: ‘Faithfulness connects the preservation and overruling of the creaturely world and includes the contingent freedom of God’s creative action.’¹¹⁷ God, as creator, does not end his relationship with creatures at the initial creative act, but continues to act in relation to those creatures as ‘the creator who acts freely and unrestrictedly’ throughout history.¹¹⁸ Pannenberg states that God’s act of continuous creation, or faithfulness to creation, is observable primarily in two ways.

First, he argues that God’s faithfulness to creation is expressed through the contemporary definitions of natural law.¹¹⁹ Pannenberg gives a brief overview of the history of physics to illustrate his point. He argues that natural laws were, in the time surrounding Newton, understood as fixed or necessary.¹²⁰ Specifically, he notes that inertia, and in particular Cartesian inertia, entails a deterministic universe eventually leading to Deism.¹²¹ Descartes argued for a form of inertia where all ‘motions’ were eternal; that is to say that once they began, contemporaneously with the creation of the world, they were, and will always be, in perpetual existence.¹²²

Descartes goes on to argue that, while God is ultimately responsible for the preservation of continued ‘motion,’ because God is immutable, this preservation is the result of the initial creative act setting about this motion,

¹¹⁷ ST2, 52.

¹¹⁸ TTN, 22.

¹¹⁹ Pannenberg, ‘Doctrine of Creation,’ 10.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹²¹ Ibid., 4-5; TQS, 69-70.

¹²² Rene Descartes, ‘The World or Treatise on Light,’ in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 85.

and not a continued interaction with the world.¹²³ To confirm his rejection of any form of continued divine interaction, Descartes adds the corollary ‘that God will never perform any miracle in the...world, and that in the intelligences, or the rational souls..., will not disrupt in any way the ordinary course of nature.’¹²⁴ Under Descartes’s influence, Pannenberg argues, discussion of *creatio continua* was precluded from subsequent theological and philosophical discourse while natural laws, and in particular inertia, were predominantly understood as necessary and fixed.¹²⁵

In the nineteenth century, the British scientist Michael Faraday began examining the nature of magnetism and electricity. This culminated in the introduction of field theory as an alternative to strict Newtonian mechanics—that employed the idea of aether through which causal influence occurred—arguing instead for ‘action-at-a-distance’ without recourse to some intervening medium. Once this alternative paradigm to Newtonian/Cartesian physics was introduced, the idea that natural laws were necessary, or non-contingent, began to be displaced, since each cause could be considered in its own right if it was not required that there was a physical medium between two objects interacting causally. The situation reached an apex once broader cosmology began to take shape in the twentieth century. It could no longer be held that natural laws were eternal once new cosmology, and in particular ‘big bang’ cosmology, gained wide acceptance as a result of field theory and quantum physics.¹²⁶ The decision to incorporate field theory here is an intentional one as it will be shown to be paradigmatic, though in modified form, of God’s causal interaction with the world as we seek to resolve the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

Pannenberg notes that the contingency of natural laws should be understood to mean that natural laws are descriptive of statistical regularities

¹²³ Ibid., 93

¹²⁴ Ibid., 97.

¹²⁵ Pannenberg, *Doctrine of Creation*, 9.

¹²⁶ TQS, 71.

that occur over time, rather than deterministic realities.¹²⁷ In other words, while each event can be considered entirely contingent, over long periods of time, regularities can be observed, which we term *natural laws*. They are epistemic models of the real existence and activity of the universe, but have no discrete ontological existence; they are perceptual regularities that do not exist independent of the matter and material interactions they describe. Pannenberg suggests they can be better understood as an expression of God's faithfulness to his creation.¹²⁸

The second way God's continuous act of creation can be seen is through the lens of God's direct historical action. While the evidence of natural laws may provide one way to understand the act of continuous creation, a better example may be found through examining other freely committed actions of God in history, specifically those that express 'the freedom of the Creator, whose actions...aim at the consummation of his creation.'¹²⁹ His aim is not merely in the upholding of creation, such as in natural laws, but in more direct causal interaction with it. In Pannenberg's theology, nowhere is this clearer than in God's self-revelation, which is where the next chapter begins.

Conclusion

This chapter has set Pannenberg's use of contingency within its broader philosophical context and shown some of Pannenberg's early applications of the concept through his development of the doctrine of creation. Pannenberg's use of the concept suggests that he is in agreement with the foundational description of contingency made by John Duns Scotus. It was also noted how Scotus's philosophical theology may have provided the foundation for contingency in the sciences, and especially within contemporary physics.

¹²⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Theological Questions to Scientists,' *Zygon* 16, no. 1 (March 1981): 71.

¹²⁸ Pannenberg, 'Doctrine of Creation,' 10; see also, TTN 77-80; ST2, 53.

¹²⁹ ST1, 418.

The Scotist description of contingency requires contingent causes always produce effects that are likewise contingent. For Pannenberg, this means that the created world is not only contingent in the entirety of its existence, but in its various particularities as well.¹³⁰ This can be extended to indicate that humans are also fully capable of contingent, yet purposed, action independent of God's action.¹³¹ However, this final point assumes something about the relation of God to humanity: namely that both the continuous creative actions of God are contingent and are characterised by love. Specifically, Pannenberg argues that God sustains the universe out of love for humanity.¹³² Ultimately, this relationship can only be comprehended, however, through God's self-revelation, which, as stated above, takes place within contingent history and is the subject of the next chapter.

¹³⁰ ST2, 20; TTN, 34.

¹³¹ ST2, 9, 70; Mostert, *God and the Future*, 97.

¹³² ST2, 69; Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Human Life: Creation versus Evolution?' in *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*, ed. by Ted Peters (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 141; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 84.

CHAPTER 2: CONTINGENT HISTORY

In the previous chapter, the philosophical and scientific definitions of contingency were explored, particularly in light of the driving questions of divine sovereignty in relation to human freedom, and of history as the framework for understanding theology. By framing our discussion of contingency in relation to action within time, we may ask what additional insight is gained for our question of divine sovereignty in tension with human freedom. As will be demonstrated, the question of divine sovereignty and human freedom connects with the second of our driving concerns, that Pannenberg's theology is best understood as one of history. As will become clear in chapters three and four, the concepts of history and time will become indistinguishable from one another. For the present chapter, however, we will examine the aspect of time traditionally understood as history as we outline Pannenberg's explicit theology of history in light of our prior discussion of contingency and the relation of the former to philosopher Friedrich W. J. Schelling. This use of Schelling, though, is brought about initially by Pannenberg's early engagement with the views of history found primarily in Barth, addressed at first in this chapter, and developed by Bultmann, as addressed in the next chapter.

1 Contingent History and Revelation

Pannenberg understands God's self-revelation within history as revelation that is contingent, in the Scotist sense discussed in the previous chapter. At the end of his doctoral dissertation, in the context of speaking

about contingent action, Pannenberg states that the concept of God's self-revelation in contingent history merits further exploration.¹³³ Pannenberg begins this exploration in *Revelation as History*, countering the then prevailing Barthian notion of revelation as direct, instead suggesting that God self-reveals indirectly through history.¹³⁴

1.1 The Barthian Perspective of Revelation

In *Revelation as History*, Pannenberg focuses on God's revelation, described as historical, indirect, and universal in appearance. Specifically, Pannenberg lays out seven 'dogmatic theses' that run counter to the then prevalent Bultmannian/Barthian perspective of revelation. It will be helpful first to examine the salient points of Barth's understanding of revelation that Pannenberg reacts against before exploring Pannenberg's 'dogmatic theses' in detail. Given the depth of treatment Bultmann's position has in relation to the 'dogmatic theses,' Bultmann will be addressed more directly in the next chapter, while this chapter will focus primarily upon Barth and Pannenberg's response to Barth given in the 'Introduction' to *Revelation as History*.

There is a generally accepted distinction among Barthian scholars between the 'early Barth' and the 'later Barth,' noting the major shift in Barth's theology that occurred over the course of a decade from 1922, when he rewrote his commentary on Romans, to 1931, when his volume on Anselm emerged. From 1932 onward, when Barth shifted from *Christian Dogmatics* to *Church Dogmatics*, his views remained fairly consistent. Pannenberg responds to this later Barth and, in light of Pannenberg's study under Barth in 1949, and Pannenberg's subsequent correspondence with Barth, we may

¹³³ Pannenberg, *Die Prädestination*, 139. As he states it, almost in an aside, *zur Bestimmtheit handelns als der auf Christus hin und von Christus her sich vollbringenden Geschichte Gottes mit der Menschheit*.

¹³⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed., *Revelation as History*, trans. by David Granskou (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1969). (Hereafter RAH), 8-19. German publish in 1961.

surmise that Pannenberg's response from one who understood Barth's theology, giving us reason to examine Barth's later view of revelation.¹³⁵

Not too long after Barth's shift of 1931, Barth published his work on the 'Apostles' Creed,' entitled *Credo*, with an appendix on his doctrine of revelation. Shortly before publishing this work, Barth also had given a series of lectures in Paris on the doctrine of revelation, now translated and collected as *God in Action*. In *Credo*, Barth begins by asserting that 'Scripture' functions 'as witness of God's revelation, that is, as pointer to an actual event taking place in space and time.'¹³⁶ Yet Barth qualifies this notion by stating that studying history, instead of the biblical text, is both impossible and decidedly not theology, thereby undermining any link between revelation to history.¹³⁷ For Barth, objective historical analysis would lead to a mischaracterisation of biblical revelation as 'myth.'¹³⁸ While he says little else about the topic in this work, the concept of myth, and in particular removing 'mythic' elements from the biblical text becomes a key issue for Bultmann.¹³⁹

In the Paris lectures, given just prior to the publication of *Credo*, Barth asserts that when one speaks of revelation, one must assume 'certitude. Either God has spoken or he has not spoken. If he has spoken, he has done so in a manner that it is impossible not to heed him.'¹⁴⁰ This is a powerful claim, and not necessarily at odds with Pannenberg's idea of revelation, but it lacks the 'philosophical rigor' that Pannenberg demands of his theological project; this

¹³⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'An Autobiographical Sketch,' in *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 14.

¹³⁶ Karl Barth, *Credo*, trans. J. Strathearn McNab (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 186-187; originally published in English in 1962, and in German in 1935.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 187-188.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹³⁹ See next chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *God in Action: Theological Addresses*, trans. E. G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 8.

sort of unsupported declarative statement is the root of Pannenberg's disappointment with much Barthian theology.¹⁴¹

Also in his Paris lectures, Barth makes two seemingly contradictory claims, at least *prima facie*, that are instructive for Barth's understanding of revelation. First, Barth declares that revelation is always of a 'far away' God, such that revelation is a miracle primarily of 'reason' based first upon 'knowledge' not observation.¹⁴² God does not come down and speak with his own voice to us. However, this would mean that revelation is not in any way by God's historical action on earth. God is removed, or 'hidden' as Pannenberg would later suggest, in Barth's account of revelation. Second, Barth states that 'revelation is God himself,'¹⁴³ as opposed to the historical *action* of God, which is how Pannenberg describes the revelation of God. For Barth, God reveals from his existence and from a removed and distinct eternity directly to the minds of his messenger. For Pannenberg, God himself is an actor within history.

While Barth's assertion that the bible is authoritative because it 'bears witness to past revelation,'¹⁴⁴ might seem amenable to Pannenberg's contention in *Revelation as History* that God's revelation is inherently historical, Barth makes additional assertions in his *Dogmatics*, which are then developed by Bultmann, that Pannenberg challenges. For Barth, revelation is primarily direct and cannot be historical because, for Barth, much scepticism about the past is insurmountable,¹⁴⁵ while, as noted above, revelation must result in certitude. Barth extends this in his discussion of the 'problem of revelation and history' by arguing that all revelation should be considered not

¹⁴¹ Pannenberg, 'Autobiographical Sketch,' 14.

¹⁴² Barth, *God in Action*, 11-12.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

¹⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 5 volumes in 14 books ed. and trans. T. F. Torrance and Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975 (German 1932-1967)) I.1, 108-109. Hereafter *CD*.

¹⁴⁵ *CD*, I.1, 294-295.

only direct, but also *ahistorical*.¹⁴⁶ Among other things, this means that the biblical text is revelatory not as a result of historical-critical analysis, which Barth claims would turn it into a ‘paper Pope,’ but because it is revealed as divine by the Holy Spirit to the faithful one, thus making the revelatory experience direct.¹⁴⁷ Pannenberg begins *Revelation as History* with a critique of Barth’s account of revelation, that describes revelation as somehow divorced from history.

1.2 ‘Introduction’ to *Revelation as History* and the Move toward Later Idealism

In the introduction, Pannenberg states explicitly that *Revelation as History* is a direct challenge to Barth’s concept of revelation. While Pannenberg accepts Barth’s description of revelation as ‘the self-disclosure of God,’ he maintains that this description is grounded in the mid-nineteenth century Hegelian theologian Philipp Marheineke who, prior to Barth, but in terms that Barth clearly echoed, speaks of revelation as occurring through ‘veiled forms.’ However, this is incompatible with Barth’s description of revelation as direct.¹⁴⁸ Since a ‘veiled’ form is incomplete, it cannot be direct in the sense that Barth maintains revelation must be. Directness, for Barth, requires completeness. This is behind his assertion, first made in the Paris lectures, that direct revelation, of the sort which Barth claims is endemic to the Christian doctrine of revelation, leads to certitude. This certitude is grounded in the completeness of revelation. This reading is confirmed near the beginning of *Church Dogmatics*, when Barth declares that the ‘true content’ of God ‘can be known by man’ as revelation, which ‘is complete.’¹⁴⁹

Despite the connection that Pannenberg makes between Barth and Marheineke, Barth heavily qualifies his utilization of Marheineke. In

¹⁴⁶ CD I.2, 54-56; While Barth does not explicitly use the term ‘ahistorical,’ he does speak of the absence of time and, refers to the ‘supra-historical’.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 525.

¹⁴⁸ RAH, 3-8.

¹⁴⁹ CD, I.1, 12.

analysing the second version of Marheineke's *Dogmatics*, focused largely upon the concept of revelation, Barth seems ready to commend Marheineke.¹⁵⁰ However, Barth believes Marheineke unwisely chose to apply the predominant philosophy of Hegel to his theology, which led to Marheineke viewing divine revelation in historical terms, which Barth rejected.¹⁵¹ Rather than an outright link between the two, Pannenberg advances a subtle critique of Barth, through Barth's treatment of Marheineke, to set up Pannenberg's own position.

Barth claims that Hegel's philosophy was an unfortunate and peripheral addition to Marheineke's theology.¹⁵² However, John Edward Toews's detailed analysis of later Hegelian writers demonstrates that, rather than an unnecessary addition, Hegel was central to Marheineke's understanding of revelation.¹⁵³ In the same work of Barth where he praises certain aspects of Marheineke's description of revelation, Barth also addresses the work of Hegel.

Among Barth's criticisms of Hegel, two primary stances can be identified as most relevant for our discussion. The first is Barth's view that, for Hegel a revelatory 'word...cannot pass between' God and man.¹⁵⁴ For Barth, Hegel's position is untenable, especially in relation to the sense of revelation that Barth outlines in the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*. The second is Hegel's view, as Barth understands it, that God's being *must* be 'as we see him in revelation,' a position Barth claims turns God into 'his own prisoner.'¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, translator not given, (London: SCM 1972), 497.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 492, 496-498.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 495, 498.

¹⁵³ John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 148-149.

¹⁵⁴ Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 419.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 420.

Pannenberg notes that the strong association with German idealism, such as is present in Marheineke's theology of revelation, does not necessitate that such a theology be rejected.¹⁵⁶ This is amplified in light of Pannenberg's suggestion that Barth's theology has the same association.¹⁵⁷ Pannenberg notes that Barth describes God's self-revelation as occurring through 'veiled forms,' which Pannenberg claims would make revelation incomplete as well as being incompatible with direct revelation. Barth's use of 'veiling' terminology demonstrates that Barth's concept of revelation is more in agreement with the Hegelian concept of revelation, and its attendant commitment to the 'hiddenness' of God than Barth admits, according to Pannenberg.¹⁵⁸

While Hegel does not use the term 'veiling' (*Verschleierung*) specifically in the context of religious knowledge or revelation, the concept is an apt description of Hegel's position. Hegel speaks of religious truth as the revealed 'representation' (*Vorstellung*) of the world that is only truly present to the 'world spirit.'¹⁵⁹ Hegel is clear that there is an objective truth concerning the world, and it is known by the world spirit, but it is not directly observable by finite beings, who must approach it via 'representation' or 'concept.'¹⁶⁰ For Hegel, 'every spiritual content and all relationships generally' as they relate to the religious, 'are representations.'¹⁶¹

Barth clearly echoes the concept of Hegelian representation when he uses the terminology of 'veiled forms.'¹⁶² Despite his lip service to direct

¹⁵⁶ Contrary to Barth, *Ibid.*, 483-484.

¹⁵⁷ RAH, 5.

¹⁵⁸ RAH, 7-8

¹⁵⁹ Hans Georg Wilhelm Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume edition of the Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J.M. Stewart (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 144-145.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁶² CD, I.1, 399-401; cf. Hegel, *Lectures*, 145-146; The claim of Hegelian influence upon Barth is hardly controversial. See for instance: JinHyok Kim, *The Spirit of God and the Christian Life: Reconstructing Barth's Pneumatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 216-220;

account of revelation through the Spirit, Barth maintains that knowledge of God, though given directly, is nevertheless veiled in the act of revelation itself.¹⁶³ For Barth, this must be the case because God is, necessarily, veiled or 'hidden' in his very nature.¹⁶⁴ For Barth, revelation must necessarily be hidden because history is flawed and God cannot be confined to human analysis. Revelation occurs to individuals, then, solely at the discretion of God's grace. He reveals himself fully to some, but in so doing is more completely veiled to others, which we might understand as a distinction between election and non-election.¹⁶⁵ But it is at this point, by claiming the fullness of direct revelation to some and hiddenness to others in such a way that revelation is particular and not general, that Pannenberg gives his primary objection.

Pannenberg's disagreement with Barth is that if Barth bases his theology of revelation, at least in part, upon Hegel, as is the case vis a vis his use of the term 'veiling' and appeal to Marheineke, then Barth's claim of a unity of God with and in Christ, particularly as it concerns the revelation found in the historic Christ, is incompatible with the rest of his theology of revelation, that demands a direct and perfect revelation. Barth attempts to side-step the issue, according to Pannenberg, by claiming that the nature of history is fundamentally flawed, necessitating a 'veiling,' which can be overcome, and in fact is overcome in the person of Jesus through miracle. By contrast, for Pannenberg, any 'veiling' in knowledge of the ultimate reality is the result of man's finitude, not anything inherent to the nature of that reality.¹⁶⁶

For Barth, God must remain the 'Subject' of revelation and never its 'Object.' To be sure, Barth acknowledges that, in the Son, God becomes manifest to us, but 'never...does He become the predicate or object of our

Andrew Shanks, *A Neo-Hegelian Theology: The God of Greatest Hospitality* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 138-140.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 401-402.

¹⁶⁴ CD, I.2, 28-31; 61-66.

¹⁶⁵ CD, I.1, 237-238;

¹⁶⁶ RAH, 6-8.

existence or action.’¹⁶⁷ Yet the particularity of Christ, that he was an historical person, would seem to contradict the notion that the Son cannot ‘become the predicate or object of our...action,’ since, as historical event, his life is subject to, and thus potentially the object of, historical investigation. This complicates Barth’s theological project all the more given that the historical occasions of the death and resurrection of Jesus constitute the apex of God’s self-revelation. Yet Barth would argue that there remains a veiling to this, precisely because it is history. It seems Barth wishes to have it both ways, maintaining that the simultaneous veiling and unveiling in the revelatory event of Jesus within history is simply a ‘paradox.’ Rather than explain the tension, Barth declares it an incomprehensible ‘mystery,’ warning that the concept of non-direct revelation turns our theology into a ‘non-Christian’ one.¹⁶⁸

Pannenberg contends that Barth’s qualification of revelation as both veiled and direct is not possible in light of the incarnation. If God can reveal himself directly, claims Pannenberg, then he reveals himself perfectly, which Barth would, in a highly qualified sense, accept.¹⁶⁹ If self-revelation is somehow ‘veiled’ then it requires interpretation and thus must be a *reflection* upon the action of God, and not the type of ‘direct’ revelation that Barth’s concept of revelation requires for the ‘Word of God’ to have authoritative and revelatory power.¹⁷⁰ The implication, for Pannenberg, is that if God is hidden in the historical actions of Jesus Christ, then direct revelation is not possible through these same actions. Barth maintains both his denial that revelation can be given to the non-elect alongside his affirmation that the incarnation is the height of revelation. Yet, to move away from the particular historical person of Jesus is to diminish the importance of the incarnation at best. The appeal to the miraculous does not avoid the complete identification of God with man in

¹⁶⁷ CD, I.1, 296; I.2, 1.

¹⁶⁸ CD, I.1, 174-176.

¹⁶⁹ CD, I.1, 241.

¹⁷⁰ RAH, 8-9

the historical person of Jesus and the problem this presents for a denial of revelation within history.

Pannenberg continues his critique of Barth by disputing Barth's fundamental example of divine self-revelation as a form of 'direct' revelation. Barth proposes that the giving of the divine name to Moses is the instance of direct self-revelation *par excellence* in the Hebrew bible, since God directly gives Moses his name, which, according to Barth, reveals the essential nature of God's identity.¹⁷¹ Pannenberg contests this because if such a revelation were direct in the sense that Barth argues it is direct, then revelation would be complete. Since it is clear from the biblical witness that revelation of God was not yet complete, in that Moses still did not fully comprehend the nature of God, it cannot be direct, at least not in the sense that Barth contends.¹⁷² Pannenberg argues we would do better to understand the revelation at Mount Sinai as part of the progression of revelation that proceeds in a necessarily incomplete fashion.

Pannenberg also contests the very use of 'Word of God' by Barth and other theologians. For Barth, the Word of God is only and entirely the presence of God given directly to those to whom he reveals himself as the direct presence of God.¹⁷³ In contrast to this, Pannenberg argues that historically, the Word was understood to be distinct from God, as something that emanates out from God. Pannenberg notes that in the Ancient Near East only the Gnostics identify the Word of God with God's direct presence in the way that Barth proposes. Contrary to this Gnostic notion, Pannenberg cites Ignatius who considered Jesus to *function* as the Word of God through which God 'breaks his silence' and not as the direct self-revelatory person of God.¹⁷⁴ That is, Jesus is God not because Jesus is the Word of God, but in spite of that fact.

¹⁷¹ CD, I.1, 363-368.

¹⁷² RAH, 8-10.

¹⁷³ CD I.1, 321.

¹⁷⁴ RAH, 10-12.

We may summarise Pannenberg's criticism of Barth as containing two primary components. First, if God's revelation is the direct and particular revelation of himself unveiled, as Barth explicitly claims it is,¹⁷⁵ through the miraculous, then the idea of progressive revelation, clearly adopted among the Israelites, is lost.¹⁷⁶ Second, if the height of divine revelation is found in the historical person of Jesus Christ, then revelation either cannot be direct or it cannot be veiled to anyone, since it is the act of his historical resurrection that is the climax of revelation.

Pannenberg proposes that, as an alternative to Barthian direct revelation, Christian theology should understand revelation as occurring indirectly, which also removes the problem of immediacy. Much work in the doctrine of revelation in the 19th and 20th centuries has sought to engage with revelation in terms of God's immediacy to individuals. This can be traced to Hegel, who understood revelation to be the immediate presence of God to the mind, and Schleiermacher, who understood religion as a form of the immediacy of experience, itself a problematic claim.¹⁷⁷

Barth attempts to overcome this issue of immediacy, where Jesus was not immediately present to his disciples *as God*, yet was still revealing, by positing that at the resurrection, and only then by those who saw the resurrected Christ, that true revelation occurred.¹⁷⁸ The impartation of the Holy Spirit, continues Barth acts as a 'mediated immediacy' by mediating the Parousia of Christ at his second coming.¹⁷⁹ Revelation, for Barth, is not only given by the immediate presence of God, but has God as its content. It cannot, then, make reference to historical events that are subject to human scrutiny, for this would be to make God an object, as noted above. It is here that we may

¹⁷⁵ Barth, *CD* I.1, 165-166; 227-247.

¹⁷⁶ RAH, 12-14.

¹⁷⁷ See, for instance, Colin E. Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 1995), 3, citing G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* trans. J. B. Baille (London: George Allen & Unwin 1949), 758, 757, 760.

¹⁷⁸ *CD* IV.3, 293-294.

¹⁷⁹ *CD* IV.3, 296-297.

note that Pannenberg has been, at best, imprecise in his description of Barth. It is true that in his commentary on Romans Barth utilizes fairly forceful language to separate revelation from finite human historical or temporal experience.¹⁸⁰ However, Barth later expressly rejects this view in *Church Dogmatics*.¹⁸¹ Pannenberg's comments against Barth seem to ignore Barth's later reversal, though Barth does not fully embrace the idea of revelation as historical. Still, we might say that Pannenberg's criticism of Barth overstates his case, and we should therefore proceed with caution.¹⁸²

Yet Barth's still retains a dogmatic view of revelation, wherein history may be a factor in revelation, but remains distinct from the direct veiling/unveiling of revelation, thereby downplaying the fact that history *is* important for the biblical witness. The message of God through the prophets is not only a mediated immediacy of revelation, since God is revealed to the prophets who mediate it to us, but has layers upon layers of mediation. We do not hear the voice of the prophets any more than we hear the voice of God. Rather, we have the historical record of the account of the prophet's message of God's immediate presence as it has been handed down through the ages. Barth might argue that these layers of mediation are themselves each attended by the direct experience of the Holy Spirit, yet this still leaves us in the problematic situation of having a revelation that is entirely subjective; indeed this is the direction adopted by Bultmann.

While one might agree that the Holy Spirit is necessary for revelation, there is a sense in which we want to have an objective perspective upon the revelation of God. Doctrinal unity, it seems, would require it. For Pannenberg, if there is an objective truth concerning the person of God, then it should be accessible via objective means. The shift from non-faith to faith requires some

¹⁸⁰ For instance, Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated from the sixth edition by Edwin C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 331-332.

¹⁸¹ CD I.2, 50; he expressly cautions against using his commentary on Romans when it comes to his comments on temporality.

¹⁸² Indeed, as will become clear, Pannenberg's primary interlocutor with respect to Revelation is not Barth, but Bultmann.

amount of objectivity to revelation, meaning it must be open to a degree of historical verification. Pannenberg's argument here does not even take into account the importance of history found within the biblical text itself, where the Psalmist, for instance, is concerned with the historical *acts* of God, and not only his direct self-revelation. Thus, Pannenberg advocates abandoning the idea of immediacy with respect to revelation.

Instead, Pannenberg distinguishes direct and indirect revelation on the basis of their content. Direct revelation has God as its content, while indirect revelation has God as its originator, but only points to God indirectly.¹⁸³ In both instances, direct and indirect, for Pannenberg revelation acts solely as an unveiling and never as a veiling. For this reason, rather than a shift toward a Hegelian concept of revelation this should be seen as a shift away from the underlying Hegelian concept of revelation in Barth and toward the later idealism of Schelling, as explained below.

The idea of revelation as an indirect historical act, notes Pannenberg, has its roots in Schleiermacher and was developed briefly by Schelling in an early lecture. This concept was systematized to a degree by Hegel, but it was the further development of the concept by Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* that provided a strong validation to this way of thinking.¹⁸⁴ As noted in the introduction, this emphasis upon Schelling is particularly important for Pannenberg. Rather than understanding his theology as built upon 'Hegelian Innovations,' as do Anselm Min among others, Pannenberg is properly read as a faithful extension of the final work of Schelling, whose own philosophy was left incomplete.¹⁸⁵ Prior to examining Pannenberg's direct critique of

¹⁸³ RAH, 13-14.

¹⁸⁴ RAH, 16-17.

¹⁸⁵ Min, 'The Dialectic of Divine Love,' 252-269, where Min argues that Pannenberg makes certain 'radical innovations' upon Hegel, all of which, as will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, are better understood in light of Schelling's lesser known final philosophical writings, which are examined in the next section. Indeed, Pannenberg's citation of Walter Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1955) toward the of his introduction (RAH, 17) indicates his emphasis on Schelling's superiority over Hegel. Whether or not such a move is fully warranted, it remains that Pannenberg relies much more heavily on Schelling than Hegel, which, as I argued at the

Bultmann, it will be helpful to explore further the grounding of Pannenberg's theses on the concept of revelation as history, which relies considerably upon the work of Schelling.

2 Connecting Revelation and History in the Work of F. W. J. Schelling

2.1 The Early Schelling to his *Spätphilosophie*

While Schelling first approaches the idea of revelation in an historical context through a reference to Schleiermacher in the ninth of his 'Lectures on Methods of Academic Study,' delivered in 1802, he does not pursue it in further detail at the time.¹⁸⁶ The theme is revisited first in Hegel's analysis of Schelling. Hegel remarks that, at the time of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* in 1806, Schelling had advanced the concept of revelation as something available to human perception or empirical observation in the natural world.¹⁸⁷ The result of such a way of thinking, notes Hegel, is that knowledge of God would be entirely contingent because it requires an observer who is external to the revelatory event.¹⁸⁸ Hegel finds such a position untenable and reinterprets Schelling, placing him within the transcendental idealism of Fichte. At the time of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel argued that Schelling had abandoned all discussion of contingent revelation and abandoned his position with regard to empirically observable phenomena. While Hegel maintained that Schelling regarded natural phenomena, whether historical actions or the fields of electricity and magnetism, as indirect expressions of 'the Absolute,' they do not constitute

beginning and will do so intermittently throughout this thesis, is one of the biggest misconceptions regarding Pannenberg's theology.

¹⁸⁶ Friedrich W. J. Schelling, 'Neunte Vorlesung. Ueber das Studium der Theologie' in 'Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums (1802)' in *Schellings Werke*, 3rd ed., vol. 3 *Schriften zur Identitätsphilosophie (1801-1806)* (Munich: T. H. Beck und K. Oldenbourg, 1927), 296-297.

¹⁸⁷ Georg Wilhelm Fredrick Hegel, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Hildane and Frances H. Simson, vol. 3 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 540-541.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 520.

revelation in the theological sense to which Schelling had referred in his earlier lectures.¹⁸⁹

According to Hegel, Schelling's position grounds the 'concrete,' which is analogous to Hegel's 'Absolute,' as a 'unity' present only within God, which develops into Schelling's identity philosophy.¹⁹⁰ In Schelling's identity philosophy, knowledge is only possible once identity has been established. This is in opposition to Descartes's *cogito*, which presumes knowledge prior to establishing identity. If identity is the foundation for knowledge, however, then identity can only be arrived at if it is established in an ontological manner (e.g., it cannot be denied).¹⁹¹

For this reason, Schelling grounds all identity in God's revelation to himself as himself, which he labels the fundamental identity property. God does not require some prior established identity because God's actions can be seen as the unity and grounding of himself within the concrete world. Either there is existence or there is not, and if there is any existence, it is only knowable because the Absolute has a concrete existence and 'knows' all things to exist.¹⁹² According to Schelling, knowledge and existence are intimately connected. Existence, to be genuine, must be 'concrete' such that it is empirically observable, and not idealist, or else there cannot be a 'knower' external to the knowledge.¹⁹³

This conception of God, which Schelling would term the 'Identity,' despite its similarities to Hegel's term the 'Absolute,' cannot be static, but must be dynamic since the Identity knows through history, which is also dynamic.¹⁹⁴ This introduction of dynamism, and therefore contingency, is a

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 538-540; 542.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 512, 525.

¹⁹¹ Friedrich W. J. Schelling, "Presentation of My System of Philosophy (1801)," transl. by Michael G. Vater, in *The Philosophical Forum*, 32:4 (Winter 2001), 352-353, 355.

¹⁹² Ibid., 354-359; 362-365.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 362-365; Schelling uses the terms 'Absolute,' 'God' and 'Identity' somewhat interchangeably.

key step in Schelling's development away from Hegel and toward his distinct philosophy. Through an appeal to history, Schelling also hoped to transition his conception of knowledge from the ideal toward the 'real.'

The early friendship between Schelling and Hegel eventually became strained as Schelling's intellectual position shifted drastically away from Fichte and, consequently, from Hegel. Schelling had, by 1807, broken more strongly from Fichte while pursuing his 'Identity philosophy,' which Hegel proceeded to ridicule in the forward to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Arguably, the resulting break in friendship left Schelling unrestrained to pursue his own philosophy to its logical conclusion.¹⁹⁵ The initial motivating factor away from idealism, which had prompted Hegel's prior critique, was Schelling's shift in focus upon a freedom which was not subverted to the freedom of the 'Absolute' but is, while derived from God's freedom, independent.¹⁹⁶ This culminated in Schelling's essay on freedom.

Schelling states at the outset of his 'Freedom Essay' that the work is attempting to reconcile human freedom with divine omnipotence without lapsing into pantheism.¹⁹⁷ Rather than fall back into the idealism of Fichte, as Hegel had suggested earlier, Schelling repudiates such idealism as inadequate.¹⁹⁸ Schelling, who by this point had begun to refer explicitly to a God who 'is not a god of the dead but of the living,' focused on how nature and freedom are related to the Christian concept of God.¹⁹⁹

The Fichtean and, even more so, Hegelian descriptions of nature seemed, for Schelling, to fall into a sort of determinism and Spinozan pantheism. According to Robert Stern, for Hegel, reality is fundamentally

¹⁹⁵ John Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 59.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁹⁷ F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2006), 10-12.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18, 22.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

understood as resulting from diverse thoughts, not actions, that are rooted in the Absolute, and this is something that Schelling finds wholly untenable:²⁰⁰

However one may conceive of the way in which beings proceed from God, the way can never be mechanical, not mere production or installation whereby the product is nothing for itself; just as little can it be emanation where what flows out remains the same as that from which it flows, therefore nothing individual, nothing independent. The procession [*Folge*] of things from God is a self-revelation of God. But God can only reveal himself to himself in what is like him, in free beings acting on their own, for whose Being there is no ground other than God but who God is. He speaks and they are there. Were all beings in the world but thoughts in the divine mind, they would have to be living already for that very reason.²⁰¹

Schelling's argument, at its heart, is simple. If the universe exists as the idealism of Fichte and Hegel maintain it must, then there would be no instant of creation, or beginning, because, as logical necessities, all things would simply exist as 'thoughts in the divine mind.' Schelling, however, maintains that there is a beginning to history, and history is not mechanical, but is contingent.

In order to maintain an independent freedom, which Schelling argues nature must have in order to be a self-revelatory act of God, the universe must also not be viewed pantheistically, and thus what Schelling perceived to be Hegel's pantheistic 'Absolute' must be abandoned.²⁰² Instead, Schelling proposes that the reality of the universe as God perceives it, in its own independence, cannot be conceived of in either strictly idealist nor exclusively realist terms, but should instead be comprehended via a medium between both

²⁰⁰ Robert Stern, "'Introduction' in *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, ed. Robert Stern vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 1993), 1-4.

²⁰¹ Schelling, *Human Freedom*, 18.

²⁰² Admittedly, there is considerable debate as to what extent Hegel can properly be labeled a 'pantheist.' To be sure he explicitly critiques 'Spinozism.' For our purposes, though, it is more important how Schelling understood Hegel, and, at least at the time of their break, this distinction by Hegel had yet to be made explicitly clear.

extremes.²⁰³ Thus Schelling attempts to unite the two philosophies, arguing that ‘Idealism is the soul of philosophy; realism is the body; only both together can constitute a living whole.’²⁰⁴ At the conclusion of the freedom essay, Schelling advocated that God’s creation of the world be understood as a contingent *ex nihilo* event beginning history, which acts as the self-revelation of God. All of God’s historical actions, in order to have occurred freely, must be understood as a dynamic interaction with the natural world, comprehended in a manner that incorporates both realist and idealist perspectives. As Schelling states it, ‘the second [beginning for the creation] is the will of love, whereby the word is spoken out into nature, and through which God first makes himself personal.’²⁰⁵

For Schelling, the investigation into human freedom meant essentially that humanity’s freedom, in order to truly be free, must be grounded entirely upon God’s absolute freedom to act within nature.²⁰⁶ It follows that if Schelling is to hold that humans are free, and this freedom is grounded in some way in God’s act of creation as a contingent act, then all of God’s further interaction with the created world must likewise have a contingent and dynamic character to it.

While Paul Tillich was correct in his assessment that, for Schelling, the totality of history is intimately connected to God’s revelation, the latter being incomplete until the former is also complete,²⁰⁷ Tillich was mistaken in his assumption that Schelling’s idea of revelation is opposed to rationality.²⁰⁸ Schelling objected to what he saw as the overly rationalistic approach of the idealism found in Fichte and Hegel, wherein there was a shift

²⁰³ Ibid., 53-66, esp. 59.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 58-59. Quoted from 59.

²⁰⁶ Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 120-121.

²⁰⁷ Paul Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development*, trans. Victor Novo (London: Associate University Presses, 1974), 65-66, 115.

²⁰⁸ Paul Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy*, trans. Victor Nuovo (London: Associate University Presses, 1974), 137-140.

away from historical revelation understood in terms of public, observable historical actions, Schelling considered this shift to be toward a private subjectivity that compromised an objective rationality that is maintained if revelation retains a public historical grounding.²⁰⁹ For Schelling, rationality requires objectivity, which in turn requires it at least be grounded in public (observable) history.

Schelling argued for an objective principle that would be a grounding for a 'positive philosophy' to act as a counterbalance to Cartesian scepticism, on the one hand, and the private or internal rationality of Fichte, on the other, which he considered too subjective.²¹⁰ Thus Schelling sought to maintain both the 'negative' philosophy, which was more closely associated with idealism and describes the world in terms of what it is not, and a new 'positive' philosophy that would allow for individual freedom. In grounding this new philosophy in the historical action of God at creation, however, Schelling increasingly began to focus not upon human freedom, but instead upon God's activity and its free and contingent character. This would lead him to build his *Spätphilosophie*, this positive philosophy, almost entirely upon the revelatory actions of God within history.

2.2 Schelling's *Spätphilosophie*

Ultimately Schelling's focus on human freedom as grounded in God's action led him to focus on the dynamic interaction of the divine with the world. The most decisive break with the idealism of Fichte and Hegel came with Schelling's understanding of Christ as the actualisation of freedom within history in his *Spätphilosophie*.²¹¹ Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* is primarily

²⁰⁹ Frederick W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 94-169.

²¹⁰ Joris Geldhof, *Revelation, Reason, and Reality: Theological Encounters with Jaspers, Schelling, and Baader* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 80-82.

²¹¹ Christian Danz, *Schellingiana*, vol. 9: *Die philosophische Christologie F. W. J. Schellings*, ed. Walter E. Erhardt (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), 14.

composed of two works consisting of lectures given from 1841-1854: *A Philosophy of Mythology* and *A Philosophy of Revelation*.²¹²

He had addressed mythology in his prior work, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, but Schelling determined that mythology only provided an incomplete description of God because it was a 'negative' philosophy of human reason, which on its own was inadequate.²¹³ In contrast to this earlier foray, Schelling wanted to combine realism with his prior idealism to create an 'a priori empiricism'²¹⁴ or a 'speculative a posteriori methodology.'²¹⁵ In other words, Schelling sought to bring together the negative philosophy, characterised as 'a priori' or 'speculative,' with the positive philosophy, characterised as 'a posteriori' or 'empirical,' in order to be able to make constructive claims, while remaining self-critical.

By doing so, Schelling hoped that it would convey something beyond what either of the systems, could convey on their own. God's actions, and thus revelation, could only be understood historically or *post factum*, and as a result would rely more heavily upon the *a posteriori* understanding of these events. Nevertheless, while the philosophy of revelation would be grounded in historical action, a necessary reflective element more closely associated with the rationality of idealism was still needed for Schelling, who still operated under some of his earlier idealist assumptions.²¹⁶ Thus it was not either idealism or realism, but both combined into the new philosophies of mythology and revelation.

²¹² Markus Zisselsberger and Mason Richey, 'Forward' to F. W. J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. and ed. Markus Zisselsberger and Mason Richey, (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2007); vi-viii.

²¹³ Victor C. Hayes, 'Introduction' to F. W. J. Schelling, *Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation: Three of Seven Books*, trans. and reduced by Victor C. Hayes (Armidale, Australia: The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1995), 8.

²¹⁴ Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 131.

²¹⁵ Geldhof, *Revelation*, 91.

²¹⁶ Geldhof, *Revelation*, 92, 101-102, 106; Grant Kaplan, *Answering the Enlightenment: The Catholic Recovery of Historical Revelation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 82; Victor C. Hayes, 'Introduction to Book Seven,' in Schelling, *Schelling's Philosophy*, 203-204.

Schelling's reason for shifting toward an *a posteriori* methodology without fully abandoning his prior (speculative) idealism is to uphold the possibility of divine freedom that God must exhibit for human freedom to find grounding.²¹⁷ If God acts freely, then he is not a mere concept, and as such cannot be known *a priori*, but is only known as he relates to the 'other' in the world through historical acts.²¹⁸ In pursuing this line of reasoning, Schelling provides the framework that Pannenberg later employs in *Revelation as History*.

The basis for Schelling's understanding of God's actions as historical revelation can be traced back to his 'Identity Philosophy.' Schelling had previously argued that an objective grounding for intellectual investigation was necessary.²¹⁹ At the time of Schelling's *Spätphilosophie*, this outside grounding is God. However, for it to truly be an outside grounding it cannot be knowable through speculation alone, for this would be an internal grounding. Rather, God must be known as a result of God's external actions. Additionally, for God's actions to be revelatory, they must of necessity not only be free, but must also be historical because human observers, to whom God is revealing himself, can only observe external actions as part of history.²²⁰ History cannot mean the idealist notion of history, but contingent and observed history because 'philosophy must deal with reality as it is.'²²¹

In order to ground knowledge in history outside of oneself, a freedom within the history must be assumed not only for God's actions, but also for the potential knower's actions, or else it cannot be said to be knowledge of one

²¹⁷ This was the argument from the 'Freedom Essay' which noted that human freedom must be grounded outside of itself if it is not to be merely illusory, yet that thing it is grounded in must be capable of grounding itself within itself (the Identity Principle from Schelling's earlier philosophy), and thus must be understood as God.

²¹⁸ Klaus Hemmerles, *Gott und das Denken nach Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1968), 139.

²¹⁹ Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 147.

²²⁰ Schelling, *Schelling's Philosophy of Revelation*, 207-208.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

person regarding another.²²² The freedom of the knower has an external grounding in God's free acts. Therefore, according to Schelling, if there is to be a genuine knowledge about anything, it must be grounded in history. This would mean that a genuine and, thus, free history also must be grounded outside of itself.²²³ Otherwise, there is no object to know as it would be known only within my own mind; this problem of internal versus external grounding can be traced back to Cartesian scepticism, where all things could be doubted until they were grounded in their own being. For Schelling, as well as many others, Descartes's solution was inadequate because he still found the grounding for his beliefs within his own existence. Rather, there must be some external, objective grounding for beliefs, else they might be internally consistent, but still otherwise illusory.

In this way Schelling arrives at the same conclusion with which he had begun his 'identity philosophy': God is the ground of all reality.²²⁴ In his Identity Philosophy, Schelling states that 'The *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes is the foundational mistake of all knowledge; thinking is not my thinking, and being is not my being, for everything is only of God or the Absolute.'²²⁵ For Schelling, knowledge of the truth can only be obtained as a result of 'revelatory event [*Sache*].'²²⁶ Said differently, knowledge of the truth must have a grounding in the free actions of God within contingent history, and these actions are what Schelling calls 'revelation.'²²⁷

²²² For Schelling, knowledge requires personhood. Machines and books do not 'know' information, but merely contain it. For us to know God and to be known by God, both must be persons.

²²³ Ibid., 209.

²²⁴ Fredrik Wilhelm Josef Schelling, 'Vierzehnte Vorlesung' in *Schelling Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, supplemental vol. 6: *Philosophie der Offenbarung: Erstes und zweites Buch, 1858* (Munich: C. H. Beck und R. Oldenbourg, 1954), 291. (Lecture 14)

²²⁵ Friedrich Schelling, *Aus den Jahrbüchern der Medicin als Wissenschaft*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, I Abtheilung vol7: 1805-1810, ed. by K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1860), 148

²²⁶ Schelling, *Schelling's Philosophy of Revelation*, 218; Geldhof, *Revelation*, 107.

²²⁷ Schelling, *Schelling's Philosophy of Revelation*, 207-209.

In lecture thirteen of Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*, he begins to address directly the process of creation as historical occurrence grounded in God. He had previously argued that the act of creation is itself characterised in terms of *Potenzen* or potentialities. Schelling had been arguing that both creation and revelation must be entirely contingent.²²⁸ Schelling's use of the term *Potenzen* is important because it clearly distinguishes him from the earlier German idealist tradition, which would not speak in terms of *Potenzen*, and suggests a connection to the scholastic tradition, for which *Potenzen* was a key term.

The difficulty Schelling encounters when speaking of contingency in terms of the pre-Thomist Scholastics is the same issue that Scotus, and Pannenberg with him, had encountered: God's sovereignty is in tension with the idea of human freedom.²²⁹ Schelling's response begins by grounding the concept of contingency, or Schelling's term *potentia*,²³⁰ and subsequently human freedom, in the action of God at creation, labelling this the '*potentia prima*.'²³¹ The freedom or contingency of created things, and particularly of humans, is grounded in God's free act. He is the first potency from which all potencies are derived.²³²

Rather than try to resolve the tension between God's sovereignty and humanity's freedom, Schelling argues that 'the tension caused by the voluntary law,' or between God's sovereign action and humanity's freedom, 'is the process of creation.'²³³ Said differently, given that there is an inherent

²²⁸ Geldhof, *Revelation*, 115, 117.

²²⁹ See chapter one; also, Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 129-130.

²³⁰ Schelling freely switches between the Latin *potentia* and the German *Potenzen*. Given the specialized manner in which this thesis uses the term 'contingency' as outlined in the first chapter, where it was shown to be interchangeable with Scotus's *potentia*, all three terms may be understood as referring to the same concept, especially once Schelling's elaboration of *Potenzen* is given specifically in terms of *Kontingenz* in subsequent lectures.

²³¹ Or 'first potency' Schelling, 'Lecture 13,' in *Schelling Werke*, supplemental volume 6, p. 274.

²³² Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 130.

²³³ *Der durch die freiwillig gesetzte Spannung bewirkte sei der Proceß der Schöpfung*. Schelling, 'Lecture 13,' 290.

tension between God's ability, as all-powerful, to act freely and humanity's ability to act both freely and independently of God, Schelling proposes that God chooses to limit his freedom through the act of creation. Schelling clarifies that these potencies are only found *in* the 'Absolute' of the Spirit.²³⁴ It should be noted that this aspect of *Potenzen* in both Creator and created is knowable, argues Schelling, only indirectly through the observation of God's action, which Schelling has yet to clearly define other than to speak of God's act of creation.²³⁵

Having claimed that God acts as his own grounding, Schelling elaborates this point in his fourteenth lecture. Schelling begins his fourteenth lecture by affirming that God is only 'God so far as he is God through the world.'²³⁶ He elaborates his point by stating 'God is only God as Lord, and he is not Lord without something over which he is Lord.'²³⁷ He allows that the creation of the world is not necessary for God since creation must be contingent.²³⁸ Instead, as the other German idealists had argued, God is God in light of his potential to create. But, Schelling continues, the position of the idealists leads to determinism, because if God were not to actualise his *Potenz* in creation, then He would not genuinely be God; the identification of God as God is only possible if it is necessary that he creates in the idealist scheme.²³⁹ To resolve this tension between the necessity of creation for God's identity, and the desire to keep creation a contingent act, Schelling seeks to provide a

²³⁴ Ibid., 263.

²³⁵ Ibid., 273, 284-287, 290.

²³⁶ Schelling, 'Lecture 14,' 291; as noted in a footnote of the last chapter this may be the source of the later spurious quote attributed to a footnote in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol I.

²³⁷ '*Gott ist nur Gott als der Herr, und er ist nicht Herr ohne etwas, wovon er der Herr ist.*' Ibid.

²³⁸ This is in part because God was nevertheless Lord, and God, before the world was created: '*Aber Gott ist schon vor der Welt Herr der Welt, Herr nämlich sie zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen.*' Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 291-292

middle ground between the world as 'fact' and the *Potenz*/potency of God's ability to make the world.²⁴⁰ In doing so, Schelling argues that creation occurs as an 'emanation of pure divine nature,' in terms strikingly similar to Pannenberg's later use of field theory discussed in chapters five and six, between these two poles of the fact of creation and the *Potenzen* of creation.²⁴¹ He attempts to find a middle ground that affirms the freedom of God, that is his independence, while still suggesting God interacts with his creatures.

Schelling argues that this middle ground is only possible if creation exists as an act in the world's history, which is to say that creation does not occur outside of time or prior to time, but as part of the 'world-process' as the first act of history.²⁴² The reason we know God is God is because God has, in history, created. By making the act of creation part of contingent history, which it must be if we are to claim that the created world is itself contingent, knowledge of creation, then, cannot be an *a priori* assumption, but is an *a posteriori* fact. Thus, God creates historically by actualising the potential existence of the world out of its non-existence.²⁴³

Schelling continues that, if the act of creation is contingent, the continued existence of the created world is also contingent. Therefore, God acts contingently both in creation and in his continued governance.²⁴⁴ Schelling insists that his claim that creation is part of the 'world process' and not external to it can be found in 'older theologians.'²⁴⁵ He then extends this to argue that the act of creation, freely committed by God, results in a 'tension of possibilities,'²⁴⁶ between the freedom or power (*Potenzen*) of God and the

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 292.

²⁴¹ *Eine Emanation der bloßen göttlichen Natur*; Ibid.

²⁴² *Weltproceß*; Ibid., 305.

²⁴³ Ibid., 306.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 294-306; by this lecture, Schelling has begun to use the term '*kontingenz*' liberally to describe creation.

²⁴⁵ '*Die ältern Theologen*'; Schelling does not name who these might be however.

²⁴⁶ '*die Spannung der Potenzen.*'

freedom (*Potenzen*) of humans, which is dependent upon God's sustained creative activity.²⁴⁷ Schelling attempts to describe the nature of creaturely freedom despite the fact that creatures are dependent on God for that freedom. For Schelling, in order for it to be a genuine freedom, it must be a freedom of autonomous things to choose good or evil independent of external pressures, which requires some assurance of sustained existence, which is in tension with a contingent creation.²⁴⁸

In order to address this tension, Schelling examines the nature of history. Genuine freedom would require that the free agent be able to choose action independent of immediate constraint. In other words, the free agent must have the ability to both perform or not perform one action at the time the action is performed or not performed. However, God's actions of creation and continuous creation have been defined by Schelling as occurring historically. In order for God's actions to be free, which they must be if we are not to consider God as world-dependent, they must have been performed for some purpose. While this would seem to function as an external constraint upon created beings, the seeming determinism might be avoidable through an appeal to the future. It could be the case, argues Schelling, that God's actions are purposed for some non-immediate future goal. Thus there could be some future purpose that, while determined, does not make prior actions leading to that goal necessary (or determined). Schelling must demonstrate that history may have a goal, but nevertheless can exist as something neither determined in the immediate nor brought about by happenstance.²⁴⁹ Schelling thus argues that while history is 'contingent, it can [still] be purposed.'²⁵⁰ If this future goal truly exists, then the sustained existence of creation can be generally affirmed up until the attainment of that future end.

²⁴⁷ Schelling, 'Lecture 14,' 307-308.

²⁴⁸ Schelling, *Freedom*, 23.

²⁴⁹ Kaplan, *Answering*, 80-84.

²⁵⁰ 'zufällig, gewollt werden kann.' Schelling, 'Lecture 14,' 308-309.

Schelling must explain how God can perform purposed contingent action that allows for a contingently acting creation to also move toward a goal. In order to avoid describing contingent action as arbitrary, and instead as purposed, which Schelling maintains is needed for the action to be intelligible and thus revelatory, the action examined cannot be ‘true in itself, but...only in connection with the whole.’²⁵¹ Schelling suggests that a contingent, yet purposed action, might be possible if the purpose of creation, and subsequently history, is understood in terms of love.²⁵² While the idea of linking the act of creation to love can be traced back at least to as early as Augustine, if we consider that Schelling’s later philosophy demonstrates a familiarity with Scholastic philosophy, we may do better to ground this point in the work of Scotus to help us approach this idea of dual goals.²⁵³

Scotus argued that God created as part of time, or as the first temporal event, and not outside of time.²⁵⁴ He lays out his logic for God’s creation most clearly in the third book of his *Ordinatio*. In discussion 32, he traces a line of argument related to God’s temporal actions and ultimately creation. God will always and only perform perfect action. Every divine action has some purpose the action is intended to achieve. God, being perfect, will achieve that purpose. The most perfect action is love. Therefore, God’s action must be characterised as one of love. Love is always directed toward some object and the most perfect expression of love would be directed toward the most perfect object: God. Therefore, God loves himself with a perfect love. This perfect love is also one that involves a community, though Scotus does not, from this, deduce a Trinity.

²⁵¹ Geldhof, *Revelation*, 87; Quoting Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*; this idea of the ‘whole’ will prove critical for establishing the connection, for Pannenberg, between Schelling and Wilhelm Dilthey in the next chapter.

²⁵² Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 130.

²⁵³ Jean-François Marquet *Liberté et existence: Étude sur la formation de la philosophie de Schelling*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1973, 571-586). Marquet convincingly argues that there is a non-Thomist, Scholastic influence upon Schelling, at least as concerns his understanding of temporality and creation, that we may trace to Scotus (*Liberté*, 584-586).

²⁵⁴ Sylwanowicz, *Contingent Causality*, 224.

Rather he reflects this back upon creation. For Scotus, God incorporates, or creates, other 'lovers' who are able to perfectly love God. It is important to note that by tying this love to the creation of the world, Scotus is not claiming that finite humans on earth do love God perfectly. Scotus maintains this love is only perfected in heaven once these lovers, whom he identifies as 'the elect,' have been fully regenerated. God, in loving the elect, ultimately loves himself perfectly. This love is extended to things that exist in reality and that exist in potentiality. To the extent that persons direct their love toward God, God's love toward them conceives of them as existent and they therefore exist. To the extent that persons neither direct love toward God, nor facilitate the love of God by the elect, they are known by God in their non-existence and thus do not exist in reality. In this way creation occurs as a result of divine love and knowledge according to Scotus.²⁵⁵

In *De primo principio*, Scotus restates the argument in shortened form, arguing that God's primary action is love, and that love is directed toward himself as a final end. Given that the world exists, it moves toward that final end of love in God. Therefore, the efficient cause for the world's existence is also its final cause in moving toward God as an object of love and adoration. However, Scotus adds the qualification that God performs this action contingently, since God is fully sufficient within himself.²⁵⁶ This leaves Scotus with an apparent paradox: God wills to know and love, and thus create, but does so both necessarily and contingently. The world is contingent because God is self-sufficient without the world, yet it is necessary because God's love, which is intrinsic to the nature of God, will, by virtue of its existence, act as the final cause for creation. Love must be directed outside of itself and then back toward the perfect. In other words, if God is love, then creation is a natural progression of that.

²⁵⁵ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio 3, d. 32, q. un*, trans. Thomas Williams. Available online [<http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~thomasw/dunsscotus/Ord3d32.htm>] [accessed 24 April 2012].

²⁵⁶ John Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as First Principle*, 2nd ed. trans. and ed. Allan B. Wolter (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966) 142-145 (4.84).

In a later work, the *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, Scotus directly addresses this tension by claiming that it is possible for contingency and necessity 'to coexist in the will.'²⁵⁷ He then states that only the end result, the final cause, is necessary while the intermediary causes may be contingent.²⁵⁸ Unable to advance his argument beyond appeals to Augustine and others, Scotus cannot consider the creation by God as occurring in any terms other than necessary ones given his attachment to immutability as a doctrine, despite his stated desire to describe creation in contingent terms.²⁵⁹

Scotus sought to link the end of creation with its beginning, simultaneously affirming an intent, purpose, or end with the contingency of the act. While Scotus could not provide a suitable resolution for the tension, he did, nevertheless, lay some groundwork that could be developed in the manner which Pannenberg utilised Schelling. One way Schelling addresses the tension between the end of history²⁶⁰ and the contingency of that same history is by relating the contingency of creation to the act of the incarnation.²⁶¹ This will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, but some introductory remarks can be made here.

For Schelling, 'the resurrection of Christ is the decisive fact of the whole of...history, which is certainly incomprehensible from the ordinary point of view.' Schelling argues that historical occurrences 'like the resurrection of Christ are like flashes of lightening in which the higher...history pierces through and steps into' our observable history.²⁶² This language is remarkably similar to the language Pannenberg uses to describe the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, particularly in *Jesus, God and Man*

²⁵⁷ John Duns Scotus, *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions*, trans. Felix Alluntis and Allan B. Wolter (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1975), 377.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 380-387.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 377-378.

²⁶⁰ Unless otherwise indicated, 'end' in the context of 'end of history' should be understood as 'terminus' not 'aim'

²⁶¹ Schelling, 'Lecture 15,' in *Schelling Werke*, supplemental vol. 6, 317.

²⁶² Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel*, 144; quoting Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation*.

and *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, both of which will be addressed more directly in later chapters.²⁶³ In essence, Pannenberg advances his understanding that in the resurrection, the end of history is breaking into the course of human history. Schelling's argument follows almost the same course, though, for Schelling, the breaking into history of the Son, as the eschatological resurrected Son, is seen clearly at creation as well.

Schelling states that the incarnate Son is the goal of creation.²⁶⁴ Having already implied that the resurrection of the Son and the role of the Son in creation are connected, Schelling goes on in his next lecture to make the connection explicit by arguing that not only is the end of history found in the resurrection, but it is in fact present in creation as well. This is possible, Schelling argues, because the end of history is always found in Christ, and Christ is in creation. If creation has the Son as its goal, and the Son as Christ is the end of history, as seen in the resurrection, then the end is an historical fact by virtue of Christ's presence in the creation of the world as well as his incarnation within history.²⁶⁵ Ultimately, Schelling admits that his argument is incomplete and perhaps circular, but that a 'divine philosophy,' can make sense of it. Nevertheless, he states a hope that a scientific philosophy²⁶⁶ may yet make his argument more sensible; though how this would be the case, again, he does not say.²⁶⁷ It is here, however, where Pannenberg's argument may continue to expand upon and modify Schelling's work to provide some of the much-needed detail, and will prove particularly important when we examine the philosophical application of field theory in chapters five and six.

²⁶³ Though Pannenberg will outright reject the language of multiple histories.

²⁶⁴ Schelling, 'Lecture 15,' 318.

²⁶⁵ Schelling, 'Lecture 16,' in *Schelling Werke*, supplemental volume 6, pp. 337-351.

²⁶⁶ *Der wissenschaftlichen Philosophie*; while this phrase does not have widespread adoption, it seems likely, given the context and later German usage (such as Hans Reichenbach's *Der Aufstieg der Wissenschaftlichen Philosophie* that first appeared in 1953) that "scientific" in connection with, though not explicitly identified with, natural sciences is the proper translation and not in the older sense of anything rigorous or academically achieved. This is explicitly dealing with philosophies that adopt scientific findings, rather than a meta-analysis one might find with 'philosophy of science.'

²⁶⁷ Schelling, 'Lecture 16,' 354.

Although Schelling ultimately leaves his final argument somewhat ambiguous, he was clear in his assertion that revelation is both historical and indirect. Subsequently, this also meant for Schelling that both divine and human actions are contingent, yet should be considered purposed. Likewise, Pannenberg's description of divine and human action is one of purposed contingency, something that sets the tone for much of his subsequent theology. Pannenberg's position, it seems, is first seen clearly in his early critique of Barth's theology, addressed at the start of the chapter. With respect to Schelling, Barth's theology of revelation had, according to Pannenberg, missed the point of Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* and, subsequently, was fundamentally flawed.

The result of understanding revelation as history is twofold. First, it yields an understanding of divine action and revelation as not just based in history, but as history itself, open to observation, and also indirect, which, as noted above, contradicts Barth, Bultmann and kerygmatic theology. Second, and perhaps even more relevant for this study, given Schelling's other presuppositions about God and God's character as characterised by love, historical action on the part of God is only possible if it is both purposed and, somehow, contingent. Schelling's argument necessitates that there is an 'inner cohesion' to the events of history and that Christ, who exists both as the purpose, and therefore end, of divine action and the ultimate form of divine self-revelation, is present throughout history.

Conclusion

After laying out the foundations of contingency and their connection to history via the acts of creation in chapter one, this chapter began the task of building Pannenberg's theology of history at the same starting point Pannenberg had for his engagement with history: revelation. The chapter began with a discussion of Barth's view of revelation that Pannenberg reacts against. Specifically, Pannenberg rejects the ahistorical nature of Barth's theology of revelation because God, in Pannenberg's view, reveals himself

through public, historic events, not in a private and direct manner. Pannenberg further buttresses his argument through an appeal to Friedrich W. J. Schelling.

The appeal to Schelling also reveals the deep influence that Schelling's philosophy has had upon Pannenberg's theology, particularly with regard to Pannenberg's view of history. By establishing the connection between Schelling and Pannenberg, and a consonance between Schelling and Scotus, we can see that Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* will prove to be particularly important in elucidating and expanding Pannenberg's own understanding of history. In particular, Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation* offers a foundation for describing contingent action that is also purposed in a way that extends the work of Scotus. Schelling's final appeal for to a 'divine philosophy,' rooted in science, will set the stage for our treatment of field theory in chapters five and six. In order to continue the development of Pannenberg's theology of history, the very nature of history within Pannenberg's theology will need to be explored in more depth, which is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: FOUNDATIONS FOR PANNENBERG'S THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

In the previous two chapters, the nature of contingency and its relation to historical events has been defined for Pannenberg's theology according the Scotist use of the term and as it was applied to history through Schelling's *Spätphilosophie*. In light of Schelling's call to find a 'divine philosophy' that connects his arguments with respect to freedom and history, we should take it as a natural starting point for Pannenberg's own theology of history to begin with the connection of divine revelation to history, as he does in his main essay of *Revelation as History*.

This chapter will begin to develop the foundational elements of Pannenberg's theology of history that will be expanded throughout the remainder of the thesis. To this end, this chapter opens with Pannenberg's criticism of Bultmann and the kerygmatic school via Pannenberg's emphasis on the importance of revelation within historical action. This emphasis upon history leads Pannenberg to a dialogue with the hermeneutical philosophies of Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans Georg Gadamer and, to a lesser extent, Martin Heidegger. In contrast to Dilthey whose understanding of history is limited to human or social domains, Pannenberg's account of history is considerably broader, encompassing what he refers to as a single 'universal' history, also in opposition to kerygmatic theology. By placing Pannenberg in opposition to kerygmatic theology, two things are accomplished. First, the importance of history in Pannenberg's theology is more firmly established, and, more critically, Pannenberg's account of divine interaction with creation in history is demonstrated. Second, several key aspects of Pannenberg's theology of

history as it pertains to the end of history are introduced which chapter four will extend.

1 Pannenberg's Theology of History in Contrast to Kerygmatic Theology

While Barth is the focus in the introductory essay of *Revelation as History*, Pannenberg's second essay, 'Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation,' focuses on Rudolf Bultmann. Pannenberg's earlier decision to engage with Schelling as a response to Barth will continue to be useful in his challenge to Bultmann. It is not disputed that Bultmann's theological position is heavily influenced by Heideggerian existentialism. It should also be noted, though, that Heidegger considered Schelling, especially Schelling's essay on freedom, to be fundamental to his own development of existentialism.²⁶⁸ Despite the influence that Schelling may have had upon Heidegger, Bultmann's theology is significantly removed from the position of Schelling. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Schelling's emphasis on freedom led him to argue that God's revelatory action was primarily historical and that this history is contingent. It is this point that Pannenberg also emphasises, against Bultmann, in 'Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation.'

1.1 A Redefinition of Revelation as Divine Historical Action

Pannenberg's second essay in *Revelation as History* comprises seven theses, some of which directly address Bultmann's thought, and some of which instead seem to be affirmations of Schelling's position, although developed in Pannenberg's own unique direction. This section will follow the order laid out by Pannenberg, in part because the theses build upon each other to a certain extent. By examining all seven theses together, a reasonably comprehensive picture can be given of Pannenberg's view of history, and how God relates to it. Briefly, the seven theses may be summarised as follows: (a) revelation is indirect, not direct; (b) revelation must be understood from its end (i.e., the end of history); (c) revelation is public, never private; (d) the

²⁶⁸ Schulz, *Die Vollendung*, 231-240.

height of revelation is in the history of Israel and in the history of Jesus of Nazareth; (e) even though the Christ event, as revelation, includes the end of history, it is still part of history (from b) and d)); (f) the cohesive picture of history and its relation to revelation held by the early church precludes any notion that the early church was gnostic or had gnostic tendencies; and (g) a reaffirmation, and redefinition, of the importance of *kerygma* (the central term for Bultmann and kerygmatic theology).

The first two theses in Pannenberg's 'Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation' may be taken as extensions of Schelling's line of thought. As noted in these theses, Pannenberg states that God's revelation is 'not of a direct type' but instead 'is indirect and brought about by means of the historical acts of God.'²⁶⁹ This is the same argument that Schelling had made in his own account of revelation, but Pannenberg bases his argument here on other factors as well. He argues that this is the understanding of revelation within Israel's own history and that of the early church,²⁷⁰ making note of the prior two essays in *Revelation as History* by Rolf Rendtorff²⁷¹ and Ulrich Wilkens.²⁷²

Pannenberg affirms the kerygmatic argument that there is a future element to salvation which the believer participates in presently, but, contrary to kerygmatic theology, claims that this is grounded primarily in the historical appearance of Jesus and not the faith of the believer or the early Church. The character of history, argues Pannenberg, 'ought not be dissolved into a mere "*that*", but should also have the substance of a "*what*".'²⁷³ In other words, the content of faith is necessarily grounded in the reality of history, and not merely the idea of history. Nevertheless, the future element is not lost by this focus on the past. Instead, argues Pannenberg, it leads to his second thesis, that

²⁶⁹ RAH, 125

²⁷⁰ RAH, 125-131.

²⁷¹ 'The Concept of Revelation in Ancient Israel,' 23-54.

²⁷² 'The Understanding of Revelation within the History of Primitive Christianity,' 55-122.

²⁷³ RAH, 131; italics added.

‘revelation is not comprehended completely in the beginning, but at the end of revealing history.’²⁷⁴

This move by Pannenberg must be read in light of Schelling’s point, noted in the last chapter, in Lecture fifteen of his *Philosophy of Revelation*. Schelling states that Christ is not only the height of God’s self-revelation, but that the end and goal of history is located within Christ during the life of the historical Jesus. Therefore, the ultimate height of revelation, its fullest expression, has already occurred within history. Moreover, Pannenberg contends that as history is continuing in a contingent manner, revelation ‘is continually *revising* itself’ despite having its fulfilment in the historical Jesus, and is only complete at the end of history, present proleptically in Christ, viewed in ‘cohesion’ with the entire historical process.²⁷⁵ If revelation concerns the whole of history, then the God who acts universally, rather than just locally, and was described as such in Israel’s record of God’s actions, thus reveals himself most completely at this united end of history; subsequently ‘broadening the *Heilsgeschichte* to a universal history’ as well.²⁷⁶ This means that, for Pannenberg, revelation, like history, has a universal character. If we accept Pannenberg’s claim that the end of history has a universal character, and that this end is integral to revelation, then it leads to his next thesis.

Pannenberg’s third thesis states that revelation, being historical and indirect, is entirely public. It ‘is open to anyone who has eyes to see. It has a universal character.’²⁷⁷ Contrary to the claim of the kerygmatic theologians, revelation cannot be part of ‘imagination,’ nor is there a need for some further ‘perfection of man’ or direct ‘supernatural’ intervention for revelation to be understood. Such concepts of revelation in kerygmatic theology limit the scope of the efficacy of revelation; imagination is entirely private, and the perfection of man as a requirement for understanding revelation implies its

²⁷⁴ RAH, 131.

²⁷⁵ RAH, 131; this prolepsis will be discussed in chapter four.

²⁷⁶ RAH, 131-133.

²⁷⁷ RAH, 135.

comprehensibility is severely limited. Accepting that revelation is comprised of public acts of God in history, along with the emphasis on the end of history and, subsequently, the whole of history for revelation, means that to truly comprehend revelation one must arrive at a comprehensive understanding of history as well.

To demonstrate that the bible itself understands revelation in terms of public events wherein God acts, Pannenberg offers a strong critique of Bultmann. Pannenberg cites Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* stating that 'Bultmann has rightly insisted that Paul never describes faith as a gift of the Spirit, but rather that the Spirit is described as the gift received by means of faith.'²⁷⁸ Pannenberg claims faith should be understood as a response to the historical act of revelation rather than the reverse, which Bultmann's position would require. Unwilling to abandon his position on revelation that requires it be direct, private, necessarily perfect, while also seeking to define faith as an existential responsibility laid upon the individual through freedom, Bultmann argues that 'faith is God-wrought to the extent that prevenient grace first made the human decision possible, with the result that he who made the decision can only understand it as God's gift.'²⁷⁹ Pannenberg is subtly noting that Bultmann's claim involves certain problematic elisions, such as ignoring Paul's description of the relationship between faith and the Holy Spirit, that Bultmann, given this awareness of Paul's description of faith as cited above, should have avoided.

Pannenberg's response is that such a reading of scripture seems unnecessarily complicated. A better explanation would be to take Paul's argument in its plainest sense: faith is simply the response to indirect historical revelation. As Pannenberg continues,

the paradox that there are persons who will not see this most evident truth [*of revelation*] does not absolve theology and proclamation from the task of stressing and showing the ordinary, and

²⁷⁸ RAH, 136; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. Trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007) vol. 1 329-330.

²⁷⁹ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, 330.

in no way supernatural, truth of God's revelation in the fate of Jesus. Theology has no reason or excuse to cheapen the character and value of a truth that is open to general reasonableness.²⁸⁰

Pannenberg questions the validity of Bultmann's methodology since it can only be maintained through significantly complicating the most basic understanding of faith (and revelation) and must explain the apparent lack of support for such an understanding in Pauline literature through an appeal to the extra-biblical concept of prevenient grace.

The fact that some people see these historical acts and do not respond in faith does not mean that revelation is somehow removed from history. Rather, revelation finds its highest point 'in the fate of Jesus.' If it is the case that revelation elicits a response of faith, rather than faith making revelation possible, then if revelation occurs, it does so by the intervention of God into human history.

In light of the previous three theses, Pannenberg moves to his fourth thesis, which declares that the 'universal revelation' of God, despite being known completely only at the end of history, is nevertheless revealed completely 'in the history of Israel...in the fate of Jesus of Nazareth, insofar as the end of all events is anticipated in his fate.'²⁸¹ For Pannenberg, while the future has not yet occurred, and is 'something beyond calculation,' Pannenberg nevertheless claims in a 'sense that the perfection of history has already been inaugurated in Jesus Christ.... With the resurrection of Jesus, the end of history has already occurred.'²⁸² Despite Pannenberg's failure in this essay to mention the presence of the end in Christ at the world's creation, it later becomes clear that this also is true of Pannenberg's theology generally as it developed.²⁸³ This will prove important for the connection this makes with

²⁸⁰ RAH, 136-137.

²⁸¹ RAH, 139.

²⁸² RAH, 141-142.

²⁸³ ST2, 52-59.

Dilthey and the discussion of the scope of history, both of which will be explored toward the of this chapter.

The coupling of thesis four, that God's revelation is perfected in Christ, especially in his resurrection, together with thesis two, that revelation can only be comprehended from the end of history, would indicate not only that the end of history is revealed in the resurrection, as will be examined in chapter four, but that this Christ event is somehow removed from history. This would call into question the extent to which the resurrection is public (thesis three), in the sense that anyone can grasp it as historical fact, and that it is indirect, which would require that it be public (thesis one). Yet Pannenberg will begin to counter this in his next thesis.

The Christ event, despite being the end of history within history, should nevertheless be understood as part of the whole of history, according to Pannenberg's fifth thesis.²⁸⁴ This allows revelatory action understood in this scheme to maintain the unity or cohesion of God's revelation, as is addressed in the sixth thesis. In order to understand the fifth thesis, we must examine the implicit questions Pannenberg is addressing. In this essay, Pannenberg is primarily concerned with the nature of revelation, which implies that the theses Pannenberg lays out must also address epistemological concerns. He must give an account not of knowledge generally, but specifically of knowledge about the divine.

As will be seen in the next section, Pannenberg frames his epistemology in an historical hermeneutic. The 'end of history' will prove vital for this historical hermeneutic, but, as noted above, if in Christ the end of history is found, Pannenberg must give an account for how this avoids determinism, and is one of the primary purposes of this thesis. If we link this idea back to Pannenberg's suggestion in the second thesis, above, that history's end 'is continually *revising* itself,' then the beginning of a solution might begin to emerge.²⁸⁵ Even while the resurrection occurred historically,

²⁸⁴ RAH, 145-147; For clarity sake, I am continuing to use 'end of history' to refer to the terminus of history, not its aim, as in the prior chapter.

²⁸⁵ See RAH, 131.

not only is the meaning of the resurrection still being determined by the course of history, but the very content as well. Again, the fuller implications of this, and how such a thing is even possible will be addressed in chapter six in relation to God as a temporal field.

The sixth thesis builds on this idea of the historic Christ event as part of the greater whole of revelation by suggesting that the first century gentile Christians understood revelation to be historical in the manner outlined by the prior five theses.²⁸⁶ By arguing that the early gentile Christian understanding of God was an outright rejection of gnosticism,²⁸⁷ Pannenberg further undermines Bultmann's claim that the early church understood revelation to be private and individual, rather than public and indirect. Bultmann's claims regarding revelation would fit the *kerygma* of the early church if and only if it was gnostic or had strong gnostic tendencies, something that the historical records seem to counter. Rather than something peripheral to the question of history and God's actions within it, the early church's rejection of anything remotely gnostic, at least in the first century, is integral to demonstrating that if there is any revelation from God, such revelation could only be the result of God's historic, public actions, and not something ahistoric as alleged by kerygmatic theology, as explained below.

Bultmann had asserted that the early gentile Christian church was essentially gnostic.²⁸⁸ Yet, while gnostic revelation argues that revelation occurs as the divine enters into a human mind, Pannenberg argues that revelation is not the revealer within humans, but the 'entrance of the revealer' *as* a human.²⁸⁹ This means that historic revelation is not, as Bultmann's argues, merely what the past church took to be revelation (i.e., kerygma), but

²⁸⁶ RAH, 149.

²⁸⁷ RAH, 149-151.

²⁸⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, trans. Reginald Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1953), 162-163.

²⁸⁹ RAH, 150. Pannenberg is making much of the distinction between *in* and *as*, which is appropriate in this instance.

that the kerygma is the record of the historical encounter with revelation. By blurring the distinction between revelation and history, Pannenberg is suggesting that the actions of the economic trinity are the primary, if not exclusive, means for understanding God.²⁹⁰

Here we can see that Pannenberg's thought conforms well with Schelling's assertion that revelatory knowledge is superior to mythological knowledge, particularly in light of Schelling's insistence that the superiority of Christianity to prior myths and religions is precisely found in the experiential occurrence of God's actions. In other words, what makes Christianity unique among religions and myths, and ultimately capable of leading to an understanding of truth, is its reliance upon the historical and free actions of God.²⁹¹

While Schelling does not mention gnosticism specifically, the gnostic preoccupation with what Schelling calls 'speculative knowledge' would suggest that Pannenberg's critique of Bultmann and Schelling's understanding of the uniqueness of Christianity share much in common. This connection, while indirect, is further supported by the rise of gnostic studies in 1818 with the publication of August Neander's gnostic studies, followed by F. C. Baur's well received 1827 dissertation, later expanded upon in 1835 as *Die Christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. Bauer's work, in particular, demonstrates a strong Hegelian influence. This makes it possible, if not altogether likely, that Schelling's emphasis upon history and critique of the shortcomings of 'mythology' is responding to gnosticism in at least some of his comments present in his *Philosophy of Mythology*. There, it is probable that, like Pannenberg, Schelling attempted to demonstrate that Christianity cannot be

²⁹⁰ For a more extensive discussion of this, see chapter five.

²⁹¹ In addition to previous discussion in chapter two, see also Isaak August Dorner, especially *History of Protestant Theology: Particularly in Germany Viewed according to its Fundamental Movement and in Connection with the Religious, Moral and Intellectual Life*, trans. George Robson and Sophia Taylor, vol. II (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 441-442; and Jon E. Wilson, *Introduction to Modern Theology: Trajectories in the German Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 65-68.

considered gnostic.²⁹² The way in which Schelling contrasts mythology with revelation in his *Spätphilosophie* needs some further elaboration.

For Schelling, the distinction between mythology and revelation is more than mere semantics. Knowledge from mythology is arrived at through the exercise of reason primarily as a response to the phenomenon of present existence. For Schelling, this means that it is an entirely negative philosophy; it is incapable of telling us what the world actually *is*, but can only give a glimpse of what it *is not*. Reason alone is incapable of describing the world as it truly is.²⁹³ Yet even mythology, while being based primarily upon reason, was still in response to the observation of the present world.²⁹⁴

Positive philosophy, for Schelling, is based primarily upon experience and has a greater emphasis on genuine historical event than negative philosophies. Thus, if one is to understand anything about the reality of the universe, it must necessarily have an historical element which is observable. From this one may move toward the ‘*a priori* empiricism’ knowledge that is the goal of his philosophy as described in the previous chapter.²⁹⁵ While reason is essential to interpreting the historical event (*Sache*) of God’s revelation, the event itself is indirect. This connection with Schelling is important for understanding Pannenberg’s overarching view of epistemology and history as will be elucidated below.

Concluding his initial critique of Bultmann and kerygmatic theology, Pannenberg’s final thesis affirms the validity of the use of the term kerygma, but not in the sense of the kerygmatic theologians. Kerygma, argues Pannenberg, is the word of God as report as opposed to revelation itself. For kerygmatic theologians, such as Bultmann, the historical fact of what occurred

²⁹² Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper Collings, 1984), 30-31.

²⁹³ Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, II Abtheilung, Vol 3 (Stuttgart: Cota, 1858), 5-7.

²⁹⁴ F. W. J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 45-61.

²⁹⁵ See chapter 2, section 2.2

is secondary to the kerygma of the early church. For Pannenberg kerygma is important, but primarily insofar as it accurately reflects the historical event. It is also useful, and acts as the word of God in the sense that kerygma is itself an historical event. While both Barth and Bultmann agree that the word of God is kerygma, for Pannenberg, it remains that when the kerygma is proclaimed or preached it ‘does not in this respect have the character of a special revelatory word. The sermon as an event by itself is not revelation, but the report of revealing history and an explication of the language of fact, which is implicit in this history.’²⁹⁶ By distancing his use of kerygma from Bultmann, Pannenberg also makes a clear distinction between the *revelation* of God and *kerygma* of God. The revelation of God consists of the historical actions of God in history, for Pannenberg, while the kerygma of God is the witness to those events as recorded in the bible and proclaimed in the church.

The commonality in both Bultmann and Barth with respect to kerygma, and what Pannenberg is rejecting, is that neither Bultmann nor Barth sees revelation as time bound. Revelation is not tied to the specific events of God’s actions and history, but is accessible today through direct revelation.²⁹⁷ Pannenberg’s distinction, then, between revelation and kerygma is that kerygma may be preached or read today, but it cannot have the same revelatory power as the historical action to which it bears witness. It is revelatory only to the extent that it is historical.²⁹⁸

This final point introduces a complication for Pannenberg’s theology, though. By setting up such a contrast between Bultmann as ahistorical and his own theology as entirely historical, we encounter a few key counterexamples. It remains true that the overwhelming majority of revelation could be described as public and indirect, but there are occasions when this is violated.

²⁹⁶ RAH, 154-155.

²⁹⁷ While Barth does acknowledge that there is certainly a role for history within revelation, indeed as required by John 1:14, he still maintains that the mode of revelation is not revelation itself. Thus one might argue that the statement is still true for Barth, just as it is for Bultmann, though perhaps in a much more qualified sense. (see CD I.2, 50-55).

²⁹⁸ This is the key distinction of Pannenberg from Barth. For the later Barth, history may be part of revelation, while for Pannenberg the history *is itself* revelation.

One might argue about the extent to which the prophets did or did not experience direct revelation that was only, then, indirect insofar as they relayed it to the people, however, the clearest counterexample comes from the New Testament. After Jesus asks the apostles who they understand him to be, Peter declares ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’ To this, Jesus directly responds that Peter understood this ‘not by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.’²⁹⁹

It would be incredibly difficult to argue that Jesus is not referring to a direct sort of revelation that, until the moment Peter spoke it, was private. Even if one were, this would throw into doubt the kerygmatic aspect of the Gospel, and would seem a rather strange argument to make. Indeed, the very idea of the incarnation, where the apostles directly apprehend Jesus, would seem to resist a strong delineation between direct and indirect revelation. Indeed Jesus himself declares that to look on him is to look upon the Father.³⁰⁰ Again, one could argue that theirs is an experience mediated through the senses, but then, given that all experiences are mediated in this way, the force of Pannenberg’s thesis is lost. Rather, we might do better to qualify Pannenberg’s theses by noting that God primarily self-reveals indirectly and publicly. Even further, we might argue that one must have strongly compelling reason to assume contemporary revelation about God is anything but indirect and public (or perhaps impossible altogether at present). Regardless, though, one might still claim that revelation is necessarily historical—even the direct and private revelatory experiences being part of a broader historical narrative. This contrast, of Pannenberg understanding revelation as history, while Bultmann is far less concerned with the historicity of it, is certainly one we can maintain without difficulty.

By setting his view of revelation in contrast to Bultmann’s, Pannenberg gives a clearer picture of his theology of history, which should certainly be seen in light of Schelling’s own call for such a project. Pannenberg’s ‘Dogmatic Theses’ serve to demonstrate several things. First it

²⁹⁹ Matthew 16: 13-20.

³⁰⁰ John 14:9

demonstrates a closer connection between Pannenberg and Schelling, with respect to a theology of history, than had previously been established. Second, it shows that, while Pannenberg argues that the eschatological element is vitally important to understanding reality and God, this does not mean that we lose the contingent character of history. This also affirms that the end of history is not an unrelated addition to the rest of history, but, as part of that history, arises from this same history affirming and redeeming that same history. Of the utmost importance for our purposes, *Revelation as History* gives more insight into the character of Pannenberg's understanding of history, something that will be expanded in the next section.

1.2 The Meaning of 'History' for Pannenberg

In a collection of essays forming the first volume of *Basic Questions in Theology*, Pannenberg extends his critique of kerygmatic theology and, in so doing, gives additional insight into his understanding of what 'history' is. In the second essay of the volume, translated as 'Redemptive Event and History,' Pannenberg seeks to find an alternative to the ahistoricity of Bultmann, on the one hand, and the suprahistoricity, understood as a separate redemptive history (*Heilsgeschichte*), of Kähler or the prehistory (*Urgeschichte*) of Barth on the other hand.³⁰¹ While *Revelation as History* is arguably a more systematic critique of the prevailing kerygmatic theology, particularly of its expression in Bultmann, Pannenberg's *Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte*³⁰² constitutes his first published critique of it.

At the outset, Pannenberg argues that 'all theological questions and answers are meaningful only within the framework of the history which God has with humanity.'³⁰³ Pannenberg notes that ancient Israel's understanding of the world and its own identity is intimately tied with history and its relation to God. In contrast to what Pannenberg labels the 'Greek view,' the God of Israel

³⁰¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 1, trans. George Kehm (London: SCM Press, 1970), (here after BQT1), 15.

³⁰² BQT1, 15-80.

³⁰³ BQT1, 15, emphasis added.

‘can break into the course of his creation and initiate new events in it in an unpredictable way.’ God’s interaction in this manner ‘forms the basis for Israel’s understanding of reality as a linear history moving toward a goal.’³⁰⁴

Pannenberg then moves to describe the structure of this history as Israel understood it:

Within the reality characterized by the constantly creative work of God, history arises because God makes promises and fulfils these promises. History is event so suspended in tension between promise and fulfilment that through the promise it is irreversibly pointed toward the goal of future fulfilment.³⁰⁵

For Pannenberg, revelation is the goal of Yahweh’s activity, motivated by love, expressed as a vow that is fulfilled. In this manner ‘the tension between promise and fulfilment makes history.’³⁰⁶ Even though Schelling is not directly referenced in the essay, the idea that God’s creative, historic action in the world is characterised by the tension between human freedom and God’s sovereignty is a clear echo of Schelling and the Stoics.³⁰⁷ The exact manner of this creation through tension, as has already been indicated above, can be expressed as God manifesting himself in the midst of creative history, and will be explored in detail in chapter six.

In order to make clear what type of history Pannenberg argues was characteristic of the ancient Israelite mind-set, Pannenberg defines two types of history. The history of Herodotus, or *Historie*, Pannenberg takes to be a focus on the factual and linear view of history divided into regular temporal intervals primarily from the perspective of human society. Contrasting this, Pannenberg describes the Israelite understanding of history in terms of the much more comprehensive *Geschichte*, which Pannenberg describes as not

³⁰⁴ BQT1, 18.

³⁰⁵ BQT1, 18.

³⁰⁶ BQT1, 19

³⁰⁷ *Der durch die freiwillig gesetzte Spannung bewirkte sei der Proceß der Schöpfung*. Schelling, ‘Lecture 13,’ 290; also see previous chapter section 2.2.

only incorporating interpretation and valuation of events, but also extending to include in history temporal events that are not exclusively tied to a human culture. For Pannenberg, *Geschichte* provides ‘an understanding of the reality of all existence’ and remains the prevailing means of the understanding of covenant for both Israel and the early church.³⁰⁸

A different view was offered by Bultmann, in his 1955 Gifford Lectures, who argued that the historical identity of Israel was distinct from the understanding of covenant for the early church, the former having been ‘swallowed up’ in the eschatological kerygma of Jesus and the early church.³⁰⁹ The result for Bultmann is that it is fallacious to assume ‘that the early Christian community understood itself as a real phenomenon in history, or that the relation to the Israelite people was understood as real historical continuity.’³¹⁰ Bultmann concludes one lecture by declaring that

The New Covenant is not grounded on an event of the history of the people as was the Old Covenant. For the death of Christ on which it is founded is not a “historical event” to which one may look back as one may to the story of Moses. *The new people of God* has no real history, for it is the community of the end-time, an eschatological phenomenon.³¹¹

Unsurprisingly, this leads to an existentialist view of the New Testament faith, as distinct from the history of ancient Israel’s faith. Specifically, Bultmann argues that New Testament faith, being eschatological, is experienced as eschatological event in Jesus Christ in the church’s preaching where the end is made present in history. Such preaching, at present, demands a present decision with regard to the ultimate eschatological fate. History, therefore, is irrelevant except where it provides meaning to the

³⁰⁸ BQT1, 21; how Pannenberg understands the distinction between these terms will be elaborated later in this chapter.

³⁰⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology: The Gifford Lectures 1955* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 28-37.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 35.

³¹¹ Ibid., 36. Italics original.

present proclamation of the future.³¹² Pannenberg understands Bultmann to mean that ancient Israel had not developed a concept of universal history and that such a concept of history is only possible in light of the eschatological *kerygma* of the early church.

In ‘Redemptive Event and History,’ Pannenberg critiques Bultmann’s assertion that the New Testament view of history is distinct from that of ancient Israel.³¹³ Pannenberg first argues that the earliest Old Testament source, J, already exhibits an universal sense of history as Israel is placed among the nations, not in isolation; as part of global history. Second, Pannenberg argues that apocalyptic thought in the Old Testament, such as the book of Daniel, contains as strong an eschatological element as is present in New Testament eschatological kerygma. Finally, Pannenberg notes that Bultmann had failed to notice the connection between promise and fulfilment in terms of history, which can be characterised as sharing a common element of *eschatological* fulfilment, not one primarily found in *immediate* history, and that this connection is observable throughout the Old Testament. Pannenberg concludes this portion of his critique by noting that the only material difference between Jewish apocalypticism and New Testament eschatology is the shift from adherence to the law in the former to adherence to the person of Jesus in the latter.³¹⁴

Pannenberg continues his refutation of Bultmann’s view of biblical history by noting ‘that the confession of Israel and that of the community of the new covenant consistently hold fast to the one history of God which binds them together.’³¹⁵ The strongest evidence for this is the New Testament use of the Old Testament, particularly in reference to Jesus. The New Testament community viewed their history in continuity with the history of Israel

³¹² Ibid., 148-155.

³¹³ BQT1, 22.

³¹⁴ BQT1, 22-25.

³¹⁵ BQT1, 25.

described in the Old Testament.³¹⁶ If Pannenberg's critique is correct, then it impacts the way a 'Christian theology of history' is constructed and understood.

The theology of history, the picture of which is being developed in this chapter, must be asserted against the Bultmannian concept of history, which Pannenberg regards as a modern Western understanding of history completely alien to the 'biblical faith...to which [our Christian] consciousness remains essentially bound.' Bultmann's centring of history upon the individual leads to an understanding of the world where 'the unity of history is necessarily dissolved' until it is so relativized that Christian faith forfeits both the uniqueness of history, that is that each historical event cannot be duplicated, as well as the promise awaiting future fulfilment, since that promise is inherently an historical one.³¹⁷

This loss of history in Bultmann, as well as the reason for maintaining a strong focus on history is addressed by Pannenberg in the essay 'Kerygma and History,' which shifts its focus from Bultmann exclusively toward Kähler providing some of the foundational elements that lead into Pannenberg's overarching view of history. Here, Pannenberg recognises that, while Kähler does not himself advocate a complete loss of history, as Bultmann does, many of Kähler's emphases lead to such a denial.³¹⁸ In particular, Pannenberg notes that, with Kähler, the 'revelatory value' is distinguished from the historical 'fact.' Pannenberg maintains that this emphasis of the kerygmatic theologians came about when they accepted 'all too uncritically the neo-Kantian distinction between being and value.'³¹⁹ It seems clear that Pannenberg has in mind here the critique of the historical school, and in particular of Wilhelm Dilthey, that was offered by Ernst Troeltsch.

³¹⁶ BQT1, 25-30.

³¹⁷ BQT1, 33.

³¹⁸ BQT1, 84-86.

³¹⁹ BQT1, 86.

Troeltsch suggests that the empirical methodology for arriving at a suitable valuation of history is impossible because cultural values cannot be established via relative history. Instead cultural values should have an *a priori* nature to them, distinct from historical fact.³²⁰ It is this interpretation of Troeltsch by the kerygmatic and dialectical theologians that Pannenberg claims has mischaracterised Troeltsch.³²¹ While it is true that Troeltsch initially noted that value is something that occurs ‘beyond history,’ (which is certainly problematic for Pannenberg), Pannenberg claims that Troeltsch eventually affirms that value is found in the eschatological Kingdom of God, which may have an historical element.³²² Nevertheless, the eschatological focus of value in the later Troeltsch, while not exactly in line with the historical emphasis of Dilthey (see below), minimises the distinction between the *a priori* derived value of the Kingdom of God and the value derived from empirically observable history; a distinction which is not only maintained by kerygmatic theologians, but one in which they favour the former.

Once this loss of historically derived value was paired with existentialist philosophy in Bultmann, argues Pannenberg, the early church’s interpretation of the kerygma became the sole means for understanding revelation today, and the historical fact to which the kerygma potentially referred became superfluous at best. In other words, kerygmatic theology shifted focus from the ‘what’ of ‘primitive Christian Easter-faith’ to the ‘that’ of present faith.³²³ For Bultmann, then, the historicity of the resurrection became secondary to the acceptance of the resurrection message. Pannenberg’s argument here, in contradiction to Bultmann, is that the message

³²⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, “Modern Philosophy of History,” *Religion in History*, trans. James Luter Adams and Walter F. Bense (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 314-315; Ernst Troeltsch *Gesammelte Schriften* Band III: Buch 1: *Das logische Problem der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1922), 67-83, 510-515.

³²¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Ethics*, trans. Keith Crim (London: Search Press, 1981), 87-88.

³²² *Ibid.*, 101-103.

³²³ BQT1, 87.

of the resurrection is indistinguishable from its historicity. The ‘what’ of the resurrection is the ‘that’ of the Easter faith.

Pannenberg admits that, while it may be possible to present a dehistoricized theology with respect to the New Testament, ‘in Old Testament studies, on the other hand, it is in no way possible to eliminate the reference of Israel’s testimonies of faith back to a continuous, Yahweh-effected history.’³²⁴ Therefore an examination of the Hebrew Bible’s understanding of revelatory history is a helpful counterpoint to Bultmann’s assertion, particularly if its view of history is linked to the New Testament one. To understand the force of Pannenberg’s argument, we must examine how he utilises the work of others to buttress his argument here.

Pannenberg’s primary interlocutor for his examination of Old Testament studies, particularly with respect to Bultmann, is Gerhard von Rad, from whom Pannenberg initially drew the connection between the ancient Israelite conception of history and the New Testament church.³²⁵ Von Rad’s *Old Testament Theology* is an appropriate choice to combat kerygmatic theology, claims Pannenberg, because it exhibits the tendencies of kerygmatic theology, such as greater emphasis on the message of revelation than on the historic accuracy of the events described.³²⁶ This is not to say that historical accuracy is unimportant for von Rad, only that von Rad is concerned with Israel’s *perspective* on historic events first, which nears the position of kerygmatic theology. It is ‘precisely for this reason this book [von Rad’s *Old Testament Theology*] can prepare the way for a genuine corrective’ to kerygmatic theology. This corrective is possible since its methodology must accept some historical grounding of Israel’s faith due to the fact that the Old Testament concerns and was written over a much broader historical period

³²⁴ BQT1, 87.

³²⁵ See BQT1, 28n, 30n.

³²⁶ Pannenberg cites as support Franz Hesse, ‘Kerygma oder geschichtliche Wirklichkeit?’ in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 57 (1960), 21.

than the New Testament.³²⁷ For this reason, the Old Testament must draw on the history established in early books to make sense of its later claims, seen especially in the post-exilic prophets' concern with the Torah. Von Rad makes it clear that any present examination of faith, especially its expression through Old Testament intellectual concepts like covenant, 'is initially to be understood as standing in the space between a quite particular past in the divine action and a quite particular future.'³²⁸

According to von Rad's account, the genuine history of Israel is fundamental to understanding the faith of the Old Testament.³²⁹ Rather than exhibiting a bias toward Israel's account of its *Historie*, Pannenberg argues that von Rad's approach is unique in that it avoids the categories of 'inner' and 'outer' history, which might be used to describe the competing particular perspectives of *Historie* by attempting to construct a narrative history of Israel from the surrounding nations. Instead, continues Pannenberg, the history of Israel is tied to the process of tradition and its transmission.³³⁰ The tradition of Israel, as it is recorded in the Old Testament, is itself the most foundational aspect of Israel's history; that is, the written text as historical document, is history, but only in relation to the broader *Geschichte* of the world. It is in this way, and not through history divorced from its historical record, that the revelatory action of God is the foundation for Israelite history in relation to *Geschichte*.

Bultmann counters Pannenberg's emphasis on *Geschichte*, and Pannenberg's corresponding criticism of his dehistoricization, first by noting that since exact objectivity with respect to historical fact is not possible, the interpreter of the biblical text may still cover the hermeneutical distance between himself and the biblical author by appealing to non-historical aspects

³²⁷ BQT1, 88; see also Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol I: *The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 106.

³²⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. II: *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), vii.

³²⁹ BQT1, 89.

³³⁰ BQT1, 90-93.

of the biblical text. The distance may be covered, argues Bultmann, because both the present day interpreter and biblical author are interested in the same subject, e.g., God, and, by virtue of their shared humanity, they have the same relation to that subject as investigator.³³¹ Bultmann concludes that the bible cannot utilise the interpretive techniques of other kinds of literature since it is concerned with the action of God as its subject, with which man has 'no previous relationship.' Instead of connecting to the past author, as Bultmann argues is valid for other forms of interpretation, biblical interpretation is concerned with the present encounter with God who interrogates the interpreter, rather than the reverse.³³²

Pannenberg notes that this leads to such a pronounced subjectivity that the plain meaning of a biblical text can be obscured by the purely subjective interpretation of *kerygma*.³³³ In contrast to Bultmann's rejection of an historical reading of the biblical text, Pannenberg states that an existentialist reading is not genuinely possible because, in losing the historical character of the text, any link with the text or its subject is ultimately lost:

Texts coming from a past epoch demand, nevertheless, an interpretation that links the historically past *as such* with the time of the interpreter. What happened then cannot be stripped of its 'then-ness' and in such a way construed as a contemporary possibility; for in that case its 'then-ness' would be missing. On the contrary, it must be related to the present precisely in its character as having happened then. This undertaking is meaningful, to be sure, only so long as the present age does not regard itself as self-sufficient, but asks about its historical heritage for the sake of giving shape to human existence in the present.³³⁴

³³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, 'The Problem of Hermeneutics,' in *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. James C. G. Geig (London: SCM Press, 1955), 241.

³³² *Ibid.*, 256-257.

³³³ BQT1, 109.

³³⁴ BQT1, 111-112.

Bultmann's emphasis on the present and future only is inadequate. Instead, Pannenberg emphasises the fundamental nature of setting the biblical text in its historic context for any understanding of the text to occur.

At its root, Pannenberg notes, one is dealing with a 'transmitted text' over a 'historical distance.' In order for the text to 'make a claim upon the interpreter...the interpreter must expose himself utterly to the particularity of what happened then.'³³⁵ The interpreter must understand the past situation 'in its disparity from his own present.' By attempting to interpret a text through an examination of the disparate historical situations between the interpreter and the situation which produced the text, the 'hermeneutical formulation of the question would thus expand into the question of universal history.'³³⁶ It becomes evident, then, that the only way that one can speak of an 'existentialist claim' the biblical *kerygma* makes on the present interpreter is if this claim is made in light of the broader context of universal history. Yet, as Pannenberg notes, 'Bultmann... did not take this step' toward universal history, nor could he, as it would defeat the basic claim of the timelessness of the *kerygma* at the root of Bultmann's hermeneutic. As a result, Bultmann's hermeneutical method is built on an incomplete premise; that is, it neglects the centrality and importance of history.³³⁷ In other words, not only is Bultmann's rejection of history for revelation inconsistent with the foundations of his existentialist interpretation, it is logically inconsistent with the scheme as Bultmann himself developed it.

Pannenberg thus affirms, in distinction from kerygmatic theology in general and Bultmann in particular, his emphasis on the essential historical element of both the biblical witness to revelation and, along the same lines, God's present relationship with the believer as a relationship marked by an essentially historical character. The historical witness of God's actions in the world finds its fulfilment at history's end, but is seen proleptically in Christ, a

³³⁵ BQT1, 112-113.

³³⁶ BQT1, 113.

³³⁷ BQT1, 113.

concept that will also be developed in the next chapter. At this point, though, we can affirm Pannenberg's description of Israel's essentially historical self-understanding of God's actions shifted in the Christ event, especially the resurrection, from the narrow *Historie* to the broader *Geschichte*.

Pannenberg has shown that, not only does revelation occur through history, but also that this history became distinct and broader in ancient Israel, and even more so in the Christian faith, from the now-dominant Greek conception of history. Accepting this distinctive understanding of history against that of the more common Greek understanding of history also affects our understanding of the revelation and meaning of history. The relation of history to meaning places Pannenberg in dialogue with Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans Georg Gadamer, and to a certain extent Heidegger, which, in turn, causes Pannenberg to consider the importance of history as a whole. This also raises some interesting epistemological questions that will need further investigation if we are to explain how the divine can be understood to act within history without overwhelming the human will.

2 Dilthey and Historical Meaning

In order to help expand upon the meaning of universal history and develop Pannenberg's theology of history, I will now examine the way in which Pannenberg's dialogue with Dilthey, introduced in the prior section, influenced his own theology. In doing so, we will see that Pannenberg also engages with the critique of Dilthey by Hans Georg Gadamer. As will be seen, this exploration leads Pannenberg to speak of history in broader terms than either Dilthey or Gadamer, and to an emphasis upon the 'end of history,' which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Pannenberg will be able to modify Dilthey's view of history and the hermeneutic of history in a way that answers some of Gadamer's objections such that, through an appeal to driving action in history, meaning may not only be derived from the end of history, but can be found in the midst of history. Prior to examining Pannenberg's own engagement with Dilthey and

Gadamer, however, it will be helpful to briefly outline Dilthey's view of history, the hermeneutics of history, and Gadamer's critique of this view.

2.1 Dilthey's Hermeneutics of History

Since we are primarily concerned with the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom through a theology of history, the current discussion will be focused upon the later period of Dilthey's philosophy where history has more prominence than in other periods. After giving an overview of Dilthey, we will explore Gadamer's critique of Dilthey prior to examining Pannenberg's engagement with both Dilthey and Gadamer. All of this ultimately moves Pannenberg toward the development of his own theology of history, which he understands in both broader and more concrete terms than Dilthey, Gadamer or Heidegger.

Dilthey himself exhibits an awareness of Schelling's philosophy when he describes Schelling as the first idealist philosopher to seriously engage the genuine nature of history and philosophy of science.³³⁸ Further, Dilthey notes that much of Schelling's philosophy just prior to the *Spätphilosophie* contained a focus not only on history, but also on the actions of the Absolute, which Schelling later identified with God, in history.³³⁹ Dilthey's view of history allows for a dialogue with Schelling. Prior to such an engagement, let us examine Dilthey's view of history on its own.

Dilthey states explicitly his view that human persons are necessarily historical in nature having rejected Schleiermacher's interpretive method because Schleiermacher's 'category of "feeling"' failed 'to do justice to the inner, historical character of human subjectivity.'³⁴⁰ Dilthey's hermeneutic of history focuses upon the individual in relation to the 'other' outside itself. He

³³⁸ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels: Und Andere Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Idealismus*, in *Wilhelm Diltheys Gesammelte Schriften* volume IV, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1925), 265.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 270-275.

³⁴⁰ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, in *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* series, gen. ed. John Wild (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 100-101.

clarifies, though, that the meaning of a human life is not solely found in the 'other,' but that 'experience in its concrete reality is made coherent' by the connections between the self and the 'other,' understood to comprise a 'system of connections.'³⁴¹ While these various connections are by no means static, but instead are 'constantly relating and interacting,' Dilthey nevertheless argues that they can be understood and interpreted.³⁴² Dilthey insists that the meaning of an individual's life is not found through introspection, giving evidence of a shift away from his early work on Schleiermacher, but fundamentally through external sensory observation, either performed directly by the interpreter or, more frequently, indirectly through the examination of the empirically observable influence and impact of an historical person.³⁴³

In order to arrive at a hermeneutic for the human life, the dynamic interactions of the various connections that comprise a human life need to be seen as comprising a greater unity. This unity is possible, argues Dilthey, because life is demonstrably goal oriented.³⁴⁴ The various events of this system of historical connections, then, 'acquire significance through their relation to the whole which sustains values and purposes.' In other words, 'historical events become significant through being links in a system of interactions in which they cooperate with other parts to bring about values and purposes in the whole.'³⁴⁵

Meaning for the individual, then, can be found through the system of interactions and the significance that the various historical parts gain from their interaction with the whole.³⁴⁶ The historian must, therefore, examine

³⁴¹ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Meaning in History: W. Dilthey's Thoughts on History and Society*, ed. and trans. H. P. Rickman (London: George Allen and Unwin, Limited, 1961), 74.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 110, 138-139.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the whole life of an individual as it expresses itself at a particular time and place. It is the whole web of connections which stretches from individuals concerned with their own existence to the cultural systems and communities and, finally, to the whole of mankind, which makes up the character of society and history.³⁴⁷

Despite this requirement for interpreting an individual's life, or the whole of history, Dilthey suggests that it is possible for the individual to gain such an understanding of the significance of her or his own life 'in the hour of death.'³⁴⁸ The outside observer may only arrive at the meaning of an individual's life once they 'retrace' the whole of that life following this final moment of possible self-awareness.³⁴⁹ In anticipation of Pannenberg, we might summarise Dilthey's hermeneutic of history by extending what he says about individuals to history itself. History, then, can only be known once the end of that history has been reached. Thus, history is only known as a whole system of interconnected events and subjects from the end or goal of that history.

2.2. Gadamer's Scepticism about a Hermeneutics of History

A primary concern in Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is to give an account of human understanding, which he approaches in terms of arriving at an appropriate hermeneutical method. Gadamer is sceptical about the viability of Dilthey's method, particularly given Dilthey's suggestion that meaning may be attained through objective empirical observation, primarily in terms of a hermeneutic of history. In particular, Gadamer argues that, in order to arrive at a viable or useful hermeneutical method, especially when dealing with historical texts or persons, we must 'free ourselves from the dominant influence of Dilthey's approach to the question, and the prejudices of the

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 79.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 106.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 74-75.

discipline that he founded: namely *Geistesgeschichte* (cultural history).³⁵⁰

Gadamer argues that the historian must distance himself from Dilthey because the methodology Dilthey advocated is unfeasible.

Gadamer notes that Dilthey had moved away from the hermeneutic advocated by Schleiermacher through attempting to find a more objective methodology than the subjective nature of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic. However, in doing so, Gadamer argues that Dilthey failed to also distance himself sufficiently from the methodology of the natural sciences—his distinction between the natural sciences and the human sciences is an artificial one.³⁵¹

This failure, as Gadamer perceives it, calls into question the validity of Dilthey's entire methodology, such as Dilthey's suggestion that a text not be approached in isolation, but should instead be interpreted in light of the author and authorial intent as influenced by his historical surrounding. By bringing in the human element, Gadamer argues that Dilthey's hermeneutic suggests that the meaning of a text could only be obtained through an understanding of the whole individual.³⁵² However, Gadamer argues that since the individual can only be understood in light of the connections the self has with the 'other,' the scope of investigation is broadened to the point that all of human existence would have to be understood in order to arrive at a satisfactory meaning for any aspect of it.

By focusing on the authorial intent rather than on the texts in themselves, as Gadamer summarises Dilthey, 'it falls to the historian to understand the history of mankind as a whole.'³⁵³ If the historian cannot understand the text in itself, but only as a fragment of a larger whole of the life of the author, the text as a fragment is not genuinely comprehensible apart

³⁵⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. and trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 147.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 171-172.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 173.

from the whole of human existence. It follows that this ‘universal framework of history lacks the self-containedness’ that might have been available were the text to be taken as a whole in itself.³⁵⁴ Crucially, for our purposes, Gadamer argues that Dilthey’s idea of a universally attainable ‘objective’ knowledge is actually unobtainable. Richard Palmer, who conducted postdoctoral research at Heidelberg under Gerhard Ebeling during which he had considerable contact with Gadamer, notes that, for Dilthey’s hermeneutic to be valid, one must obtain a perspective ‘above history from which history can be looked upon.’ Gadamer argues that finite subjects cannot rise above their time and place to arrive at an objective knowledge: ‘Such a standpoint presupposes an absolute philosophical knowledge—an invalid assumption.’³⁵⁵

The end of history, which Dilthey claims is a prerequisite for meaning since history must be taken as a completed whole that connects to its historical end, is, according to Gadamer, unobtainable; history has no end from which finite human observers can survey it in its entirety. The task of the historian ‘to understand history of mankind as a whole’ is an impossible one.³⁵⁶ Gadamer summarises his critique of Dilthey’s universal history by stating that, for Dilthey, ‘the ontological structure of history itself, then, is teleological, although without a telos.’³⁵⁷ The trouble is that any historical event can only be understood at the conclusion (its telos), since prior to that point the historical importance, including its connection to all future events can only be assumed based upon that portion of history that is known. Thus the meaning of history, according to Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey, is oriented toward this end. But if history can only be understood in reference to each event’s final impact, all historical interpretations are meaningless until that end is reached.

Even if the purview of history is limited to an individual’s life, Gadamer concludes that, by Dilthey’s criteria, it is impossible to know the

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 175.

³⁵⁵ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 178.

³⁵⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 173, 178.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 179.

meaning of one's own life while still living.³⁵⁸ In the end, Gadamer rejects Dilthey's method primarily because it is impossible to examine history as whole. Instead, history is primarily composed of internal fragments loosely connected to each other, but from which no greater unity can be established.³⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Gadamer does remain open to the idea of a universal history that is required for Dilthey's hermeneutic to work. However, he heavily qualifies such an openness to the point of near impossibility. Any possible unity to history is only observable from the perspective that 'appears to an infinite spirit,' although Gadamer does not immediately explain what he means by an 'infinite spirit.'³⁶⁰ He continues by admitting that, were it perceivable, such a unity could explain 'human affairs' as part of a greater cycle of nature and thus give meaning according to Dilthey's criteria.

Gadamer suggests an appeal be made to Löwith, who describes history as part of an 'eternal cycle of nature,' not limited to human domain.³⁶¹ In other words, while Gadamer is doubtful that history can be understood as a universal whole, he allows that such a perspective might be possible, but only if the view of history is expanded beyond a narrow focus on humanity to encompass a much broader focus, including, for instance, the natural world. By expanding the view of history beyond mere human history, it is conceivable that an infinite perspective would be obtainable by an infinite agent. Gadamer speaks of this through the possibility of a 'spirit' (*Geist*) that encompasses all of history, clearly demonstrating the influence of Hegel, though he fails to elaborate on what this possible solution would mean or look like.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 175-179; Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 177.

³⁵⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 175-179.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 480.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 481.

³⁶² Robert B. Pippin, 'Gadamer's Hegel' in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225-227; in later English editions of *Truth and Method* there is an attached supplement by Gadamer, 'Hermeneutics and Historicism' where Gadamer admits the talk of 'spirit,' usually, or 'world spirit,' always, is derived from Hegel who he feels R. G. Collingwood's discussion of Dilthey failed to take

Ultimately, Gadamer dismisses the idea as too impractical. Rather, the ‘spirit’ which might encompass all of history is a construct and not an agent, certainly not something capable of knowing or perceiving in the traditional sense. It is here that we may move back to Pannenberg’s response to both Dilthey and Gadamer.

2.3 Pannenberg’s Retrieval of Dilthey in light of Gadamer’s Critique

Positively, Pannenberg affirms Dilthey’s emphasis on the whole of history as essential to understanding the various parts of history and their relations to each other as essential for a suitable hermeneutic.³⁶³ However, Pannenberg criticises Dilthey’s explanation for how an individual may ‘grasp’ the meaning of his or her own life at the final hour of death. This fails to take into account the impact of an individual’s actions upon a society or other individuals. In other words, even after the death of an individual, the meaning of the life of that individual may continue to be revealed through continued interactions and connections that the individual’s life had with his or her surrounding society.³⁶⁴ Because of this, Pannenberg agrees to a certain extent with Gadamer that Dilthey’s emphasis on the individual human person is far too narrow.

By Dilthey’s own admission, one would have to wait until the end of history itself in order to fully determine the meaning of an individual’s life.³⁶⁵ Dilthey sought to overcome this problem of the presently incomplete history, notes Pannenberg, by attempting to relate the parts of history that have already

seriously enough as a necessary element for his hermeneutic. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and rev. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2011), 515. (full article pp. 507-545). Gadamer notes further that Collingwood failed to understand the nuance of Dilthey’s German properly and thus the entire chapter on Dilthey in Collingwood’s *The Idea of History* ‘is most disappointing,’ 514. I agree with Gadamer’s assessment, and thus Collingwood’s treatment of Dilthey has not been covered in detail here.

³⁶³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J O’Connell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 511. (hereafter ATP)

³⁶⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. III, trans. R. A. Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1973), 200-201. (hereafter BQT3)

³⁶⁵ BQT1, 162-163, citing Dilthey, *Meaning in History*, 106. See also ST1, 54.

occurred to the projected whole of history in an effort to predict the nature of history's end. However, Dilthey failed to give a satisfactory criterion by which to evaluate the importance of the various events of history relative to the whole. The result of this shortcoming is that 'the [historical] parts themselves cannot attain any firm footing without knowledge of the whole... [because] only knowledge of the whole can make clear what significance the parts really deserve.'³⁶⁶ Despite these shortcomings, Pannenberg attempts to redeem Dilthey's methodology. Pannenberg acknowledges the advancement on historical hermeneutics made by Gadamer's description of the interaction of the historical text or person with the present as occurring via a 'fusion of horizons.'³⁶⁷

The 'horizon' to which Gadamer refers is the finite historical situation in which a person lives or a text is created. For Gadamer, 'every finite present has its limitations.'³⁶⁸ Thus, by virtue of being time-bound, the horizon of an individual or of an historical message is limited. This horizon encompasses not only what is immediately accessible at the particular historical event, but also what can clearly be seen as part of the horizon more generally; the time and culture immediately preceding and following a particular historical event, which might constitute a broader period of time, are part of the horizon of that historical event. The relative importance of these various factors is determined by how they are viewed from a particular point.³⁶⁹

Despite insisting that the 'horizon' indicates a distinct limit to vision, Gadamer nevertheless fails to define precisely the limits of a horizon. Can someone in the present interpret something or 'grasp' the meaning of an individual from a discrete horizon? Though they may be examining the same 'point' their perspectives of that point (their horizon) is different. Therefore,

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 164.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 117, citing Gadamer, *Warheit und Methode*.

³⁶⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 300-305.

the process of interpretation requires that a ‘fusion of horizons’ (*Horizontverschmelzung*) take place.³⁷⁰

For Gadamer, though, the process of understanding does not stop after a single such fusion, but is ongoing. Understanding history and historical messages requires the continual fusion of horizons as our purview is continually expanded.³⁷¹ Gadamer, fully aware of Hegel’s influence upon him, freely employs the terminology of the ‘dialectic’ of history to describe the process of the fusion of horizons.³⁷² Nevertheless, he is also critical of Hegel’s dialectic because, as Gadamer reads Hegel, the process of dialectic can eventually arrive at a completion, something that Gadamer argues is not possible, at least not for finite human beings.³⁷³ This is due to Gadamer’s claim that any finite, temporal present, and correspondingly any related message or text arising from it, can only be understood via a ‘fusion of horizons,’ and that a complete understanding of any such event would necessarily encompass the whole of history, or the horizon would need to be expanded to infinity thus losing its limit, and it is therefore unobtainable for finite human interpreters.³⁷⁴

Despite Gadamer’s objections and scepticism regarding a complete understanding of any particular historical event, Pannenberg attempts to rehabilitate Dilthey in light of Gadamer’s critique. Pannenberg finds in Gadamer’s interaction with Dilthey a position that still places a preference of the whole over the parts, and that acknowledges the task of humanity as ‘understanding reality as a whole.’³⁷⁵ According to Pannenberg, this means that, for Gadamer, the ‘reality of history is exhibited in the process of

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 273.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 306.

³⁷² Ibid., 343.

³⁷³ Ibid., 345.

³⁷⁴ BQT1, 120-121.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 120.

understanding itself,' even if, for Gadamer, this process is incomplete.³⁷⁶

Since the impossibility of understanding the whole of reality, or even a single historical event to its fullest extent, is due to the finitude and temporally bound nature of human interpreters, if a perspective which was neither finite nor temporally bound could be attained, then the incomplete process of the 'fusion' of historical horizons would no longer be problematic. Gadamer suggests that such a position might be obtainable if one could take seriously Hegel's notion of a 'spirit' that encompasses the whole of history.³⁷⁷

Nevertheless, as has been briefly mentioned above, Gadamer explicitly rejects the Hegelian methodology, claiming his fusion of horizons is distinct from Hegel's 'total mediation of the present by means of history.'³⁷⁸ Gadamer finds Hegel's dialectic of history to be deficient, and what Gadamer understands to be the determinism of the Hegelian 'spirit' to be untenable.³⁷⁹ As noted above, according to Gadamer, any interpretation of historically bound persons or texts in the present must overcome an infinite 'background of meaning,' in order to be total in its interpretation, which inevitably makes Gadamer sceptical about the possibility of ever understanding the 'fusion of horizons' that is necessary for a complete hermeneutic of history.³⁸⁰

Despite this scepticism, Pannenberg notes that 'strangely enough, the [observed, historical] phenomena, which Gadamer describes, move time and again in the direction of a universal conception of history, something which he would like to avoid in view of the Hegelian system.'³⁸¹ That, is, Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' is still a system that moves in the direction of a universal concept of history, even though Gadamer acknowledges that the process is necessarily incomplete.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 116-117.

³⁷⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 482-485.

³⁷⁸ BQT1, 122.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 129, 121.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 124-126.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

Pannenberg suggests that a unity to history might be possible, even if such a unity is only possible from an infinite perspective. If a unity for all of history could be observed, then meaning can be found as Dilthey suggested, though with considerable expansion upon what ‘history’ means. Such a unity would include the future, though, as well as the past and present, and thus any knowledge of the meaning of history currently would be, at best, ‘a *provisional* knowledge.’³⁸² Still, such a knowledge and comprehensive perspective could be obtained only by a non-temporally bound observer. As an alternative to the Hegelian spirit, we could propose that the observer of history could be identified as God, who could be both the subject of history and an agent interacting with it. Because God could be an agent, he is able to communicate the content and meaning of history to other agents within history. Instead of the deterministic spirit, the ‘spirit’ here would be free and would respect the unique contingency of historical beings and events.

Despite Gadamer’s concerns, Pannenberg argues that it is still possible to arrive at a comprehensive ‘philosophy or a theology of world history.’³⁸³ For Pannenberg, the development of such a philosophy or theology is aided, rather than hindered, by Gadamer in that he broadens Dilthey’s focus on a single individual life to include society, societal connections of an individual post-mortem, the historical progression of societies, and eventually moves ‘beyond all of them to the totality of mankind and universal history.’ In this way, Gadamer indirectly affirms Dilthey’s position that universal history is the only true history; that is, there is no peculiar or personal history that is distinct from universal history—the horizons are all focused on the same end and thus comprise different perspectives of the same ‘what’ of history.³⁸⁴

Gadamer’s engagement with Dilthey, then, is necessary for arriving at a comprehensive theology of history and the interpretation of that history. Indeed, Gadamer himself would later go on to praise Pannenberg’s analysis of

³⁸² Ibid., 126, 129, 135, italics original.

³⁸³ Ibid., 134-135.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 162.

Truth and Method, going so far as to say ‘I think there is really no dispute between Pannenberg and myself, so far as I understand him.... There is only the difference that for the Christian theologian that “practical purpose” of all universal historical conceptions has its fixed point in the absolute historicity of the Incarnation.’³⁸⁵

In order to help sharpen our understanding of what is meant by history, we should examine Pannenberg’s subsequent engagement with the underlying assumptions in his engagement with Gadamer: namely, Heidegger’s ‘appropriation’ of Dilthey.³⁸⁶ Of course, Gadamer himself had engaged with Heidegger’s perspective on history and meaning prior to the writing of *Truth and Method*.³⁸⁷ Indeed, the source of much of Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey can be traced to Gadamer’s acceptance of a Heideggerian method of interpretation.³⁸⁸ This examination on our part of Pannenberg’s work will aid us in developing Pannenberg’s theology of history and understanding the manner in which it responds to the driving problem of this thesis: the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

2.4 Pannenberg on Heidegger’s ‘Appropriation’ of Dilthey toward Vogriff

We will see that, though Pannenberg ultimately rejects Heidegger’s use of Dilthey because it results in too narrow a hermeneutical viewpoint by focusing almost exclusively on individuals, a fault Pannenberg also finds in Dilthey, Pannenberg nevertheless believes that Heidegger makes an important, positive contribution to the dialogue.³⁸⁹ For Pannenberg, Heidegger shifts the

³⁸⁵ Hans Georg Gadamer, ‘On the Scope of Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,’ reprint of 1967 essay in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (London: University of California Press, 1976), 36-37.

³⁸⁶ BQT1, 162-163.

³⁸⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 8.

³⁸⁸ Jean Grondin, ‘Gadamer’s Basic Understanding of Understanding,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 40-41.

³⁸⁹ BQT1, 162-163; though it should be noted that Heidegger himself described Dilthey’s approach as too narrow, even if he failed to broaden it as much as Pannenberg argues is

focus from actual wholeness to the language of ‘possible’ wholeness. By doing so, arguably, Heidegger has suggested that wholeness comes from an orientation toward the future completeness of life, rather than being something attainable in the present, where it is incomplete.³⁹⁰

One reason for this shift from actuality to possibility may be Heidegger’s attempt to move away from Husserl’s phenomenological subjectivity.³⁹¹ While Husserl tried to ground his phenomenology in the individual experiences of human subjects throughout history of the world, Heidegger argues, citing Scheler against Husserl, that it is precisely because of its subjectivity that we can never gain genuine insight into the perspective of these subjects. As other persons who possess their own experience that shapes their worldview, they are distinct from us, and thus their perspective is not entirely accessible. In order to establish an objectivity for myself and any text, I cannot look to history for I cannot understand it in its fullness, reasons Heidegger.³⁹²

Instead, Heidegger argues that the present ‘human existence [*should act*] as its [*own*] ultimate point of reference.’³⁹³ In particular, Heidegger cites theological concepts, such as the *imago Dei*, as early evidence of an attempt to ground what he labels the ‘ontology’ of *Dasein*, but what we are referring to as hermeneutical meaning (to maintain consistency with Dilthey and Bultmann).³⁹⁴ These fail, for Heidegger, as do most other attempts to arrive at a concept of meaning, in part because the present experience of *Dasein*, and *Dasein*’s orientation to the future, has precedence over the past for Heidegger

necessary. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. and trans. from the seventh edition by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: The Camelot Press, 1962), 72-73 (German 46-47).

³⁹⁰ BQT1, 164-165.

³⁹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 73 (German 48); Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 179.

³⁹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 73 (German 47-48);

³⁹³ Palmer *Hermeneutics*, 179; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 74 (German 48-49).

³⁹⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 74-75 (German 48-50)

as he develops a grounding for his ontology of *Dasein*.³⁹⁵ This focus on the present and future, while minimizing the importance of the past was later adopted by Bultmann, relying heavily upon Heidegger. By doing so Bultmann arrives at a hermeneutical position marked by a de-emphasis on history, in favour of present existence, and, even more so than Heidegger, an increased focus on the future and our relationship to the coming future. For Bultmann, this meant a rejection of history as the primary means for understanding the *kerygma* of the early church, as has been noted above.³⁹⁶ While this does not necessitate a total rejection of the role of history in interpretation, it remains that both the early Heidegger and Bultmann de-emphasise the past in order to focus on the present to the point of a functional irrelevance of the past, in a clear move away from Dilthey.³⁹⁷

While Pannenberg criticises Bultmann for not taking history seriously enough, he does acknowledge the positive emphasis upon the future found in Bultmann, something that Pannenberg believes Heidegger did not act upon as forcefully as he could have. Pannenberg understands Heidegger to argue that the meaning of *Dasein*'s self-relation and being-to-the-world is accessible in relation to the constant approach of death, as Dilthey had argued, with the key difference being that Heidegger claims that this meaning might be attainable at the present via *anticipation* of one's death.³⁹⁸ Pannenberg rejects this line of argument because anticipation is not concrete enough and such a move assumes, similar to Dilthey, that death is the end of both the individual as *Dasein* and of the potential impact that an individual may have.³⁹⁹ Even purely

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 76-77 (German 50-52).

³⁹⁶ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 48-51.

³⁹⁷ See *Being and Time*, 188-192 (German 148-151) for Heidegger's uninterpreted position. Obviously, as with many other thinkers, there is considerable debate as to what, exactly, Heidegger meant. For our purposes, though, we are concerned with how Bultmann, who identifies as Heideggerian, and Pannenberg, who sought to reject Bultmann, understood Heidegger.

³⁹⁸ BQT1, 166; to be sure, *Dasein* is complicated and, while not directly corresponding to the common notion of identity, is nevertheless connected to it, particularly s concerns authentic versus inauthentic existence.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 166-167.

atheistic hermeneutics allow for a person's overall impact to extend beyond the individual's life, particularly in light of the strong interconnectedness of society.⁴⁰⁰ The impact of a life beyond an individual's life is important, not only for historical studies, but is foundational for a theology concerned with history, considering the importance of eschatology and eternity for Christian theology.

To address this perceived shortfall in Heidegger's concept of anticipation, Pannenberg suggests first that rather than consider anticipation in terms of anticipation of the end of life, one consider anticipation to be based upon the ultimate future wholeness, that is the 'end of history,' a concept that will have in depth examination in the next chapter.⁴⁰¹ Second, Pannenberg argues that the concept of anticipation, as used by Bultmann is not powerful enough to make an existential or interpretive claim in large part because it would seem to devolve into an abstract and subjective state of mind.⁴⁰² Instead, Pannenberg suggests that instead of speaking in terms of 'anticipation,' as Bultmann does, we make use of the category 'fore-conception' or '*Vorgriff*,' which is itself a Heideggerian term.

Arguably, for Heidegger, *Vorgriff* is an essential element in any interpretive event. Before an individual text or event may be interpreted, a conception of the future wholeness as *Vorgriff*, must be in the interpreter's mind.⁴⁰³ This *Vorgriff*, which can be both more concrete and more objective, is grounded in the unity of *Dasein* which finds its primary expression in the future; or, as Heidegger states it, '*The primary meaning of existentiality is the future.*'⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 168-169.

⁴⁰² Keep in mind that Pannenberg is attempting to revitalize Dilthey's position here which necessitates a single objective truth.

⁴⁰³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 191-193 (German 150-151).

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 374-376 (German 327-328).

Pannenberg extends his understanding of the application of Heidegger's *Vorgriff* to hermeneutics of history by stating that 'the category of fore-conception [*Vorgriff*] makes it possible to conceive the history of mankind as ordered toward a final destination without skipping over the unfinished character of the factual course of events.' In other words, the *Vorgriff* of *Dasein* can function as a presently comprehensible goal or whole toward which the various parts of history are ordered and moving.⁴⁰⁵ Still, the difficulty with *Vorgriff* is that it is not fully known in the present and thus our understanding of it could be mistaken or a mere yearning for what will never be actualised.⁴⁰⁶

In order to resolve this problem, something more definitive is needed. What is required is the actual or genuine presence of the future goal within the midst of history, for the whole of history afterward to be interpreted comprehensively. A genuine and complete hermeneutic of history, along the lines suggested by Dilthey, requires a 'pre-appearance' within history of history's end. Even with such an arrival, however, Pannenberg acknowledges

this statement is again an anticipation whose validity can only be proven in the future. Until then, the difference between a pre-appearance and the ultimate, which is inherent in the fact that the former is the appearance of the latter, will be mirrored by the anticipation of that which appears in a pre-appearance, in such a way that such anticipations will anticipate the ultimate truth of events as the definitive *arrival-in-pre-appearance* [*Zum-Vorscheingekommensein*] of the ultimate.⁴⁰⁷

In other words, for history to be comprehensible, as described by Dilthey and Gadamer, we must move beyond a speculative *Vorgriff*, and into a concrete or definitive *Vorgriff*.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ BQT1, 170-171.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 172-173.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 173.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 174-175.

This definitive *Vorgriff* has been given, argues Pannenberg, in the actions of God, who is both infinite and not historically bound, yet has been encountered historically, at the resurrection of Christ.⁴⁰⁹ The absolute proof of this event as the end ‘*arrival*’ of the future in the midst of history, however, will not be attained until the end of history is reached. Thus, it may be the case that history is comprehensible through the event of the resurrection as the future breaking into the midst of history, but only at history’s end will the revelation of God be made complete and the resurrection fully seen for what it is. Then history and its meaning will be known to have been comprehensible all along through the resurrection event.

To be sure, this means that history can have meaning now, but this meaning will not be vindicated as such until the end of history, meaning it must be taken on faith until then.⁴¹⁰ Relatedly, we might also be a bit more precise in our description of Pannenberg’s view of revelation. It seems that, for Pannenberg, revelation must be observable historical events, and is distinguished from non-revelatory events only in that revelatory events have God as their immediate source.

Given Pannenberg’s predilection for objectivity, we might ask by what criteria an event can be known to have God as its immediate source, and thus be revelatory. Unfortunately, we are left only to argue that, for Pannenberg, the identification of an event as revelatory can only be confirmed at the end of history when our experience of God is no longer indirect. Thus events that truly revealed the nature of God, as God is then experienced, can be known, at this end, to have been revelatory. This appears to be a very unsatisfactory conclusion, only making a mild improvement on Barth’s and Bultmann’s own position. While technically it remains more objective than Bultmann’s view of revelation, it is practically indistinguishable in many instances, utilizing the

⁴⁰⁹ BQT1, 175; the way in which the resurrection provides the more definitive *Vorgriff* will be addressed in the next chapter.

⁴¹⁰ The problem, then, is no longer hermeneutical, but epistemological.

concept of faith to avoid the problem of discerning objectivity.⁴¹¹ Pannenberg will attempt to resolve this disparity, to some degree, in his discussion of the ‘end of history’ connected to the resurrection of Jesus, as will be discussed in the next chapter, but it ultimately is not known to be true until the full experience of that end occurs.

Pannenberg’s intentional distinction between what he calls the mythological attempts to obtain the *Vorgriff*, present in German idealism, and the potential for its actual arrival as the end of history through the historical Christ bears the marks of Schelling’s *Spätphilosophie*, which distinguished between the speculation of mythology and the more definitive nature of historical revelation.⁴¹² In light of this, it becomes clear that Schelling’s call for a comprehensive philosophy or theology of history is needed in order to arrive at comprehensive meaning for any event, text, or person. In order to comprehend fully anything, we must first have a concrete *Vorgriff*, and to recognise the *Vorgriff* as such, we must first develop an overarching philosophy or theology of history.

Pannenberg continues his argument by asserting that the resurrection of Jesus was not only a ‘prophetic announcement’ of the arrival of the eschaton, but that the ‘final destiny of each man is decided by their relationship to him and his message’ in the resurrection.⁴¹³ The resurrection is central to Pannenberg’s theology because, in it, the end of history is found, and therefore it is ‘the ultimate revelation of God in Jesus.’⁴¹⁴ Again, this focus on the end of history being present in Christ as the climax of history also sounds like the Schelling of *Philosophie der Offenbarung*.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹¹ In other words, Pannenberg has failed to address the deeper epistemological question by instead arguing that things must be taken as revelatory by faith, which lacks the objective epistemological rigour initially sought.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 175-176.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 178-180.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴¹⁵ ‘Lecture 16,’ in *Schelling Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, supplemental vol. 6: *Philosophie der Offenbarung: Erstes und zweites Buch, 1858* (Munich: C. H. Beck und R. Oldenbourg, 1954), 337-354; see also chapter 2 section 2.2

While in the previous chapter it was noted that Schelling's focus on the end of history is in the Christ at creation, Pannenberg has instead located this end in the Jesus of the resurrection. In so doing, Pannenberg agrees with Schelling's assessment that history is comprehensible only from the end which is already present in Christ, and through whom humanity is given the revelation concerning the meaning of history. In addition to this, Pannenberg has also advanced Schelling's view that revelation, and thus constructive meaning, is only comprehensible within the context of the 'philosophy of history' that Schelling himself failed to develop fully, but which began to find a more complete expression in Dilthey as modified here.

Pannenberg states that such a focus on the presence of the end of history in the historically raised Jesus helps us to get past the 'post-Hegelian problem we live in.'⁴¹⁶ That is, by focusing on the end of history present within history, Pannenberg is able to use the hermeneutical method of Dilthey and overcome the critique of Gadamer, without appealing to the deterministic spirit of Hegel. God as Spirit who is neither time-bound nor finite can provide the understanding of history that comes from perceiving history as a whole from the end of history without necessarily impinging on human freedom. The task remains, then, to define the relationship between the end of history and present human experience, as will be done in chapter four, as well as to describe the way in which the Spirit functions presently to provide this understanding that is linked to the end of history, as will be done in chapters five and six.

For now, we might note that, by refocusing Dilthey's hermeneutical framework for history,

it is possible to find in the history of Jesus an answer to the question of how "the whole" of reality and its meaning can be conceived without compromising the provisionality and historical relativity of all thought, as well as openness to the future on the part of the thinker who knows

⁴¹⁶ BQT1, 181.

himself to be only on the way and not yet at the goal.⁴¹⁷

The nature of this goal, the end of history, and its arrival in the midst of history will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, but it is necessary now to define the scope of history that Pannenberg has in mind in order to better understand what sort of ‘end’ and to which ‘history’ we are relating this end. As has been intimated throughout this discussion, Pannenberg argues that to focus solely on human history is too narrow. One of Pannenberg’s primary critiques of Dilthey is that he did not take seriously enough the historical character ‘of understanding something handed down from the past.’⁴¹⁸ That is, human civilisation did not spring up from nothing, but was the result of a previous temporal process, one which involved non-human creatures at some point. These prior temporal events, while not generally considered part of human culture, are nevertheless linked to it, impacting that culture and cannot therefore be ignored if one is to present a holistic view of history. To address this reality, Pannenberg argues for a modification of Gadamer’s postulated infinite spirit, itself adapted from Hegel. As noted, Pannenberg wishes to avoid the determinism that accompanies a Hegelian Spirit, seeking to instead ground the language of Spirit in the Christian God. Such a move must consider this God as the one who ‘in the beginning...created the heavens and the earth.’⁴¹⁹ If taken from the perspective of such a spirit, and acknowledging that human history must be understood in light of what precedes human culture, History, then, is broader than the perspective of human persons. It should instead be understood from the perspective of God as God observes temporal occurrences, from its creation until its end. As has been argued, Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey’s position, and the inadequacy of Heidegger’s perspective on history (and by extension Bultmann’s perspective) thus leads

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 116.

⁴¹⁹ Genesis 1:1.

Pannenberg to suggest history is not defined by a purely human perspective. Pannenberg, therefore, offers a different definition of *Historie* and *Geschichte*.

3 Redefining Terms: *Historie* and *Geschichte*

In *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Pannenberg expands upon his distinction from Hegel and even from Herder who both hold ‘that the understanding of the human person as subject [of history] originated in Christianity.’ In the supposedly new philosophy of history offered by Hegel and Herder, it remained that their ‘unity of history... presupposed human beings to be the active subjects of history,’⁴²⁰ something that has already been shown to be inadequate—it does not reach back far enough. What Pannenberg labels the ‘post-Hegelian problem,’ that philosophical treatments of history were heavily influenced, positively or negatively, by Hegel, resulted in humanity being considered the subject of history, and the only valid perspective for history. While it is true that Hegel hypothesized an ambivalent spirit of history, he nevertheless presumed human actors were still the primary focus of history; the Spirit that gave the supposed unity to history was not an active agent and was thus inaccessible. Pannenberg continues to explain that

in the period after Hegel the philosophy of history again took a general anthropology as its basis. This was the case with Feuerbach and even Marx, with Nietzsche and even the early Dilthey. In his critique of historical reason Dilthey originally aimed at reducing the manifold of history to its anthropological presuppositions and conditions.⁴²¹

Even Dilthey’s later work, as noted above, took ‘human sciences’ as the basis for his ‘hermeneutic’ of history.⁴²² Rather than abandon the concrete structure of history, as Pannenberg argues Heidegger and Bultmann did by reducing this

⁴²⁰ ATP, 487.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 488.

⁴²² TPS, 72-80; 160-163.

history to mere ‘possibilities,’ Pannenberg suggests a return to the older Christian concept of history that was not focused on anthropology.⁴²³

The idea of focusing history upon humans and human action dates back at least to Herodotus. However, the revelation of God to the Hebrew people suggested the possibility that history should be understood primarily from a divine, rather than a human, perspective.⁴²⁴ This different perspective of history was expanded in early Christianity in light of salvation history. Pannenberg notes, for example that, for Irenaeus, ‘Salvation history was not tacked on to the concept of the human being but, rather, replaced it.’⁴²⁵ In other words, once Christ became incarnate in the person of Jesus, the Christian was able to understand history in a way that replaced the human perspective of history with the divine perspective of history as God’s redemption of creation.

Augustine acknowledges Herodotus’s description of history, but nevertheless rejects it. Although history is concerned with ‘human institutions of the past...it should not for that reason be counted among human institutions.’⁴²⁶ Instead ‘history itself (*ipsa historia*)’ has God as its author and controller.⁴²⁷ For Augustine, history relates past temporal events ‘in a faithful and useful way’ not limited in scope to human past temporal events.⁴²⁸ This Augustinian perspective, notes Pannenberg, was lost entirely in the ‘humanist period’ which preceded the German idealists.⁴²⁹

In the beginning of the discussion of history in his theological anthropology, he asks,

⁴²³ ATP, 488.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 502, 495.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 499.

⁴²⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green in *Oxford Early Christian Texts* series, general ed. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 106/107 [Book II, 28/44]

⁴²⁷ ATP, 502, citing *ibid.*

⁴²⁸ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, 106/107 [Book II, 28/44].

⁴²⁹ ATP, 503.

Can history be considered part of the shared world in which individuals live their lives? Does it not have to do, rather, with the coming into being and passing away of this shared world, and do these processes not take place despite all the efforts that human beings make to preserve the order of their world against its slow erosion by time and against the sudden vicissitudes of fate?⁴³⁰

Rather than an anthropocentric phenomenon, Pannenberg suggests that history is ‘ambivalent’ to the ‘successes and failures’ of human society.⁴³¹

This is not to say, though, that Pannenberg is claiming that we focus on *Geschichte* over *Historie* or some similar distinction. Rather, in his redefinition of history, Pannenberg also seeks to acknowledge the somewhat artificial nature of these distinctions in order to speak only of a single history, understood in different terms, as the one in which God reveals himself and of which we are concerned. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger locates the initial source of the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* in the correspondence of Wilhelm Dilthey and Count Yorck.⁴³² This distinction is between the facts or study of history (*Historie*) and the lived experience, or impact, of history (*Geschichte*).⁴³³

However, as Alejandro Vallega notes, the distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie* was made earlier by Martin Kähler.⁴³⁴ Of course, Kähler was concerned with the distinction between the *Historie* of the first quest for the historical Jesus, and the *Geschichte* of the Christ of faith, seeking to place emphasis on the latter over the former.

⁴³⁰ ATP, 485.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 486.

⁴³² *Being and Time*, 449 (German 397).

⁴³³ Ibid., 449-455 (German 397-404).

⁴³⁴ Alejandro Vallega, “‘Beyond Historical Thinking’”, in *Contributions to Philosophy*, ‘in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott, et al. in *Studies in Continental Thought* series (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 53.

Pannenberg argues that *Historie* is limited in its scope to past recorded history, and thus only to past events from a human, and therefore finite, perspective. In contrast, *Geschichte*

has an impetus that takes it beyond the present and will in the future reveal the facts of the past in a new light, disclose new semantic relationships in them. Because of its exclusive concern with the past, history [*Historie*] leaves the question of the final meaning or essence of the realities it investigates quite open.⁴³⁵

In order to arrive at a suitable hermeneutic for history, *Geschichte* must be taken as the primary perspective, in part because *Historie* alone, can never be fully comprehensible because it is limited solely to a finite human's perspective. Meaning 'can be discovered only with reference to the totality of reality,' which includes, but stretches beyond 'the total context of human experience.'⁴³⁶ Again, *Geschichte* refers not to a fundamentally different kind of history than *Historie*, but to a different primary perspective of history: that of God because only God is capable of comprehending all temporal events as a whole.

Because of this, Pannenberg concludes that 'history is not made up, therefore, solely of human actions.'⁴³⁷ Instead, 'every serious theology of history refers to *God* as the determinative power active in historical reality.'⁴³⁸ The biblical witness as report, mentioned in Pannenberg's *Revelation as History*,⁴³⁹ is a report not of the human interaction with the divine necessarily, but of a foundational witness to God's activity in history.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ TPS, 69-70.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁴³⁷ ATP, 504, 486.

⁴³⁸ Pannenberg, *Human Nature*, 87; italics mine.

⁴³⁹ RAH, 154-155.

⁴⁴⁰ ST1, 239-243.

God not only possesses the primary perspective from which history is understood in Pannenberg's theology, but also conveys personally the unifying factor of creation in a way that humanity is incapable of doing due to its finitude. 'The divine subject which in the Christian theology of history guarantees the unity of history cannot be replaced by a human subject—not by hypostatized collective subjects nor by the "collective singular" of history itself.'⁴⁴¹ Ultimately, then, Gadamer's critique of Dilthey was correct, in that Dilthey's focus was far too narrow, but Gadamer did not move the philosophy of history in a distinctly theological direction and was therefore left with scepticism about the hermeneutic of history and its ability to grant meaning to the whole of history. Divine sovereignty, by giving unity to the flow of history, also directs and 'guides the course of history' toward its goal. Ultimately, such an 'invasion' by God is too problematic for 'the modern mind' which is likely the reason behind its rejection, claims Pannenberg.⁴⁴² This is why Dilthey, Gadamer, and Heidegger's historical hermeneutics failed to give a comprehensive account of all of history as a grounding for the objective truth that Pannenberg seeks, and the grounding God's revelation in that history would require for Pannenberg. Indeed, Gadamer and Heidegger both explicitly reject the idea that there can be a comprehensive account for history, suggesting that there is no infinite perspective from which to view all of history, one that could only be provided by an infinite figure. Gadamer's and Heidegger's rejections of a comprehensive view of history, continues Pannenberg, is due to the apparent contradiction between human freedom, which both philosophies require, and absolute divine sovereignty that a comprehensive perspective of history would seem to entail, thus excluding, for them, any sense of human freedom.⁴⁴³

Although Pannenberg argues that the primary locus of God's presence is in the future, he nevertheless claims that the future which 'is final and

⁴⁴¹ ATP, 505.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 505.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 506.

definitive is thus present in the relativity and flow of history, [*yet*] not indeed in the mode of finality but in the form of anticipation.’ It should be noted, ‘anticipation’ here is distinct from Heidegger’s *Vorgriff*. While Heidegger argued that *Vorgriff* was the closest observable presentation of the future in the present, Pannenberg argues that ‘anticipation’ is the result of the actual presence of the future within history. Thus Heidegger’s *Vorgriff* is primarily the result of speculation, while Pannenberg’s ‘anticipation’ is the human response of longing for the future as a result of an empirically observable event, an event which entails the actual presence of the future within historical experience.⁴⁴⁴

Thus a unity is given between the not-yet-occurred but already-present future and the initial divine act: creation. One result of this unity is that history is essentially the whole of ‘cosmic time,’ for Pannenberg.⁴⁴⁵ The nature of this future focus, along with the greater implications of the aforementioned unity to history and the general theology of history are the subject of the next chapter. This not to suggest that the problem of human freedom in connection with divine sovereignty, noted by Gadamer and Heidegger, is resolved, only to provide us with a direction forward. By incorporating this robust vision of the end of history as the unity of all history, which will be described in terms of dimensions of time over the next three chapters, we may begin to describe the way in which an already complete end to history, which reveals the absolute sovereignty of God, does not, by that same token, overwhelm the freedom of creation, though this will require a considerable exploration of the nature of the goal or end of history.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a critique of Bultmann’s theology of revelation and, in doing so, demonstrated a couple of things. First, it showed Pannenberg’s close connection with Schelling. Second, it not only solidified

⁴⁴⁴ ST2, 142-143.

⁴⁴⁵ ST2, 144.

the assessment of Pannenberg's theology as committed to history, but highlighted this by defining God's revelatory actions as historical. This is important for our purposes because it means that God's actions are understood in Pannenberg's theology in such a way that they do not overwhelm the will of creation, but rather invite a response, and only in this way constitute revelation. Considering the focus on meaning and history, the chapter then went on to address the hermeneutical history of Wilhelm Dilthey, and rehabilitate his system in light of Gadamer's critique. In the course of doing so, three further arguments were made.

First, the scope of what constitutes history must be considerably expanded, and this will continue to be addressed in the next chapter. Second, the idea of a unity to history that occurs at the 'end of history,' first alluded to with respect to Schelling in the second chapter, was reintroduced, via Dilthey, and will continue to be addressed in chapters four and six. Third, Heidegger's sense of *Vorgriff* was introduced that will also require further explanation in the next chapter, with its focus on the 'end of history.'

CHAPTER FOUR: A THEOLOGY OF HISTORY: THE GOAL OF HISTORY

The concept of the ‘end of history,’ discussed at length in the previous chapter, is a difficult one to grasp in Pannenberg’s theology, and it will continue to be addressed throughout chapters five and six as well. Moreover, we do not need to merely define the end of history, but also to describe our relationship, as humans, to that end. We will need to explore the manner in which we can speak of the end of history as ‘definite,’ which it must be if we are have any hope of labelling certain historical events as divine revelation, but nevertheless avoiding a determinism that would fly in the face of our driving question: how can we consider God sovereign and humanity free?

In order to accomplish this, the present chapter will begin with an exploration of theological anthropology as it functions within Pannenberg’s theology. Particular attention will be given to humanity’s relationship with the end of history, or ‘eschaton.’ After this, the discussion will turn to Christology. The reason for this is because of the unique position the historical person Jesus has in Christian theology as both a human person and the infinite God, who, for this very reason, is the apex of revelation. This revelation is found in its most tangible form, for Pannenberg, in the resurrection of Jesus, which Pannenberg labels an ‘eschatological event.’ Pannenberg goes so far as to declare that, in the resurrection of Jesus, the end of history has been revealed in the midst of history. This necessarily leads us to a discussion of the end of history, its relationship to eternity, and the extent to which we can speak of the end of history as already occurring while still maintaining that history between now and that end remains contingent. First, though, we must

pick up the conversation where the previous one ended, with a discussion of humanity's relationship to the end of history which means that we begin this chapter with anthropology.

1 Anthropology

Pannenberg has two primary works related to theological anthropology. The first, published initially in 1962, is based largely upon a series of lectures delivered between 1959 and 1961, entitled *Was ist Der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie*. The second, *Anthropologie in Theologischer Perspektive*, was first published in 1983. Despite the considerable distance between the two, they are in remarkable agreement; there is no dramatic shift, as one finds between the earlier and later Barth. Indeed, as Ted Peters has noted, Pannenberg is very consistent throughout his theological career, and Pannenberg himself notes, in the introduction to the latter work, that his later anthropology is an extension of the themes first raised in his earlier anthropology.⁴⁴⁶

For Pannenberg, anthropology is approached from a perspective of 'fundamental theology.' While fundamental theology has been defined in various ways, it is perhaps best to understand it as a philosophical response to the historic human condition, particularly as it finds expression through the incarnation of Christ, through whom the Church, and thus all subsequent theological pursuits, finds validity.⁴⁴⁷ In particular, Pannenberg is likely considering fundamental theology of the sort that is explored by Karl Rahner who framed it as theology that is concerned primarily with the historical and, particularly, the anthropological.⁴⁴⁸ This is distinguished from the dogmatic

⁴⁴⁶ Ted Peters, 'Introduction,' in *Towards a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 2-3. ATP, 23.

⁴⁴⁷ One sees similar veins in Heinrich Fries, *Fundamental Theology*, trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1985), 164, 533, 534; and Matthew Becker, *Fundamental Theology: A Protestant Perspective* (London: T&T Clark, 2015) who convincingly demonstrates who it is not exclusively Roman Catholic, with a Protestant grounding in Schleiermacher, 84, 356, 514.

⁴⁴⁸ Karl Rahner, 'Towards A Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II,' *Theological Studies* 40: 1979 (reproduced online in cooperation with *Theological Studies*)

theology, which is concerned with propositional truths already affirmed by an ecclesial body, is less concerned with theology arising *a posteriori*, and is particularly prevalent among the dialectical theologians, by a more explicit connection with philosophical approaches to anthropology. Rather than a superfluous topic, Pannenberg considers fundamental theology to be essential for the development of his greater theological project, especially as it concerns the building of a theology of history.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, it should not go unnoticed that the earlier anthropological work was derived from lectures delivered during the time of Pannenberg's work on his ground-breaking *Offenbarung als Geschichte*⁴⁵⁰ or shortly thereafter.

Anthropology for Pannenberg, like revelation, is understood best in historical terms. This is not to say, however, that anthropology has no relation to the divine, or is found exclusively in the human experience understood in secular terms, as a recent commentator on Pannenberg's anthropology has claimed.⁴⁵¹ Instead, while Pannenberg takes as his starting point humanity's relation to the world, following not only Dilthey and Heidegger, but also Max Scheler, Johann Gottfried Herder, Helmuth Plessner, and Arnold Gehlen. Pannenberg claims that humanity cannot find its meaning, its essential anthropology, in the finitude of itself or humanity's experience of the world, as discussed in the prior chapter. Instead a proper anthropology is grounded in God's actions within history and from the end of history, exemplified in the person and message of Jesus. This is not to suggest that anthropology is entirely removed from the current existence of mankind. Rather an interesting dynamic emerges between human action and that of the divine, with the result

available online: <http://tirprogram.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Rahner-Reflects-on-Vatican-Two1.pdf> accessed 23 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theologie und Philosophie: Ihr Verhältnis im Lichte ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996), 337-339.

⁴⁵⁰ *Revelation as History*, English translation.

⁴⁵¹ See Kam Ming Wong, 'The Quest for Human Openness in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,' *Theologische Zeitschrift* 4, no. 60 (2004), 350-368. For Pannenberg's earlier and explicit rejection of this idea see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1970), (Hereafter WIM), 38-39.

that, for Pannenberg, to speak of anthropology one must also speak of salvation.

1.1 Revisiting Heidegger: *Dasein* and Authentic Existence

Pannenberg opens both of his primary works on anthropology with an assessment of the impact that existentialism has had upon philosophical and theological anthropology.⁴⁵² Foremost among these influences is Martin Heidegger, who exerted considerable influence not only upon Bultmann, but also upon Karl Rahner. As noted in the previous chapter, for Heidegger the meaning of *Dasein*,⁴⁵³ is found through *Vorgriff*, yet this term is best understood in the context of the related terms *Vorhabe* and *Vorsicht*, comprising the whole of *Dasein*. Heidegger argues that *Dasein* understands the world in its ready-to-handedness, that is, present to *Dasein* ready to be utilised and understood by *Dasein* through *Dasein*'s being confronted by the ready-to-hand world while recognizing the distinction between *Dasein* and the world. This is a result of preconditioning from fore-having (*Vorhabe*), and foreseeing (*Vorsicht*), which together allow *Dasein* to have a fore-conception (*Vorgriff*), of the ready-to-hand world.⁴⁵⁴ In other words, in order for *Dasein* to comprehend the world, *Dasein* is first prepared for it through preparatory knowledge of the world gained from prior experiences of the world and speculation, or 'thrownness' of the world as it will be. *Dasein* makes predictions, or is granted future knowledge, concerning the world based upon other experiences. These experiences inform the understanding of the world, and the events or objects within the world, prior to meeting or confronting these objects.

For Heidegger, interpretation, and thus meaning, of 'something as something' relies upon the object being grasped via *Vorgriff*.⁴⁵⁵ However,

⁴⁵² WIM 2. And ATP, 11.

⁴⁵³ While *Dasein* is not the directly equivalent for an anthropological discussion of human individuals, it is the closest to a proper philosophical anthropology Heidegger offers.

⁴⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 190-191 (H. 150).

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

because all interpretation, particularly interpretation indicative of *Historie* has presuppositional ready-to-handedness (fore-conception and fore-seeing), it lacks sufficient rigor to give meaning to *Dasein*, unless *Vorgriff* can somehow be made authentic, something neither he, Heidegger, nor Pannenberg genuinely thought possible.⁴⁵⁶ That is, *Dasein* does not encounter the world fresh without the presuppositions of interpretation marked by culture that are imparted to *Dasein*, but encounters the world, and in particular when encountering the world through the framework of *Historie*, through these cultural presuppositions. Thus an authentic *Vorgriff* that encounters the world only as it is, and not through cultural presuppositions, may not be possible.

Nevertheless, Heidegger offers that this inauthenticity of *Vorgriff* may be overcome for *Dasein* so long as *Dasein* confronts itself as a whole. This ‘authentic Being-a-whole of *Dasein* [*is*] possible with regard to the unity of its articulate structural whole’ via ‘anticipatory resoluteness.’⁴⁵⁷ This anticipation is one of a future which confronts *Dasein*, such that *Dasein* finds its authentic Being only insofar as *Dasein* is ‘letting-itself-come-toward-itself’ particularly as regards the ‘*future as coming towards*’ *Dasein*.⁴⁵⁸ The interconnectedness of Being means, for Heidegger, that authenticity and understanding of Being are only possible if *Dasein* grasps the whole of its Being including its completion (as it is presently and will be in the future that is connected to present being). The critical component is the confrontation of the future completion of Being for *Dasein*.

This future confrontation of *Dasein* with itself is characterised by Heidegger as *Dasein*’s ‘Being-toward-death’ yielding an ‘authentic’ existence.⁴⁵⁹ Thus, it is the future anticipation of death that gives meaning and authenticity to the individual or *Dasein*. The result is that ‘*Dasein* never “finds

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 194, (H. 152-153).

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 372 (H. 325).

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., italics original.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

itself” except as a thrown fact,’ that is, as a self-throwing its being as present *Dasein* toward its future Being and eventual terminus.⁴⁶⁰ The unity of *Dasein* is granted only from the end of life in the future because of the incomplete nature of *Dasein* at the various modes of past, present, and future existence. Heidegger refers to these temporal modes of being as the ‘back-to,’ ‘letting-oneself-be-encountered-by’ and the ‘toward-oneself’ nature of *Dasein*’s existence, requiring an ecstatic experience. These three dispositions of

the “towards...”, the “to...”, and the
“alongside...” make temporality manifest as
three ἐκστατικόν pure and simple. *Temporality is
the primordial “outside-of-itself” in and for
itself.* We therefore call the phenomena of the
future, the having been, and the Present, the
“ecstases” of temporality.⁴⁶¹

Even though *Dasein* is characterised by these various ‘ecstases,’ this does not constitute authentic Being. Instead the various ecstases serve to stretch *Dasein* between birth and death such that *Dasein* lacks an authentic existence so long as it is found solely in an ‘historicized’ ecstasis.⁴⁶² It is only through the broader, universal *Geschichte*, characterized as a unified, ecstatic Being, that *Dasein* finds unity, wholeness, and authenticity. This differs substantially from what is (for Heidegger) the fragmented facticity of *Historie*. So strong is the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* for Heidegger, rooted in the correspondence between Dilthey and Count Yorck, that authentic Being can only be found in reference to the mode of being that most closely corresponds to the future, being ‘toward oneself’ and only insofar as it is simultaneously being ‘outside of oneself’ or ecstatically.⁴⁶³ For Heidegger, ‘*The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future.*’⁴⁶⁴ This ‘authentic temporality’ found in *Geschichte* that incorporates the future can be

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 376 (H. 328).

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 377 (H. 328-329) Italics, ellipses, capitalization, Greek, and hyphenation all original.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 425 (H. 373), 427 (H. 375).

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 430-434; 449-455 (H. 379-382; 397-404).

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 378 (H. 329); italics original.

authentic for *Dasein* presently if *Dasein* is ‘futural’ in awareness of its own fate as finite, that is of *Dasein*’s ‘Being toward death.’⁴⁶⁵ Only then does *Dasein* have authentic existence.

1.2 Modifying Anthropology

While Pannenberg finds much he agrees with in Heidegger’s anthropology, he finds it lacking in a few areas. Although it may be tempting to suggest that the commonality between Pannenberg and Heidegger is rooted in Heidegger’s concurrence with the later Schelling, or the influence of Duns Scotus, such influences are not prevalent within Heidegger until his later philosophy, only recently published as his *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*.⁴⁶⁶ Pannenberg does see something of value in Heidegger’s initial major work, *Being and Time*, in both the description *Dasein*, and the priority given to the future. However, even at this basic level significant modification is necessary for Pannenberg.

For Pannenberg, the history that grants meaning to *Dasein*, the one in which God acts, must be the same history as is studied by historians.⁴⁶⁷ The distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie*, first suggested by Kähler is artificial.⁴⁶⁸ For Pannenberg, a human is essentially an historical being, not in an history external or above the detailed facts of human existence, but precisely in the midst of them, and this history also comprises the realm of

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 437 (H. 385).

⁴⁶⁶ For the Schelling connection see, George J. Seidel, ‘Heidegger’s Last God and the Schelling Connection,’ *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 55, no. 1 (1999): 85-98; With regard to the link to Scotus, Heidegger, of course, wrote his *Habilitationsschrift* on John Duns Scotus, and Philip Tonner makes the convincing argument that elements of this, particularly as regards contingency, resurface in Heidegger’s later philosophy in *Heidegger, Metaphysics and the Univocity of Being* (London: Continuum, 2010), 3-4, 28-42. However, considering the rather late publication of Heidegger’s later work, it had no influence on Pannenberg’s earlier anthropology, and likely had very little, if any, on his later work in anthropology; Pannenberg does recognise a certain level of congruence between Schelling and Heidegger, via Bultmann, but ultimately rejects it as taking Schelling’s use of mythology to an extreme that neglects genuine history. See BQT3, 20-22, 70-71.

⁴⁶⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Human Nature*, 85-87.

⁴⁶⁸ ATP, 491. See also, Millard Erickson, ‘Pannenberg’s Use of History as a Solution to the Language Problem,’ *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17, no. 2 (1974): 102-104.

God's revelatory actions. Only in such a concept of history can anthropology truly begin for Pannenberg.⁴⁶⁹

Pannenberg also disputes Heidegger's notion of the world as 'ready-to-hand.' Instead, argues Pannenberg, one of the fundamental distinctions between humanity and the animals is that humanity creates and modifies the world to make it 'ready-to-hand' rather than experiencing, or seeking to experience, the world as 'ready-to-hand' without this manipulation. 'Only subsequently, by building a cultural world, an artificial world, does man prepare his surroundings in such a way that they become something ready-to-hand for him.'⁴⁷⁰ This concept, which Pannenberg derives in part from Scheler, means that a human '*has* the world' while an animal is '*in* the world.'⁴⁷¹ Heidegger's notion of the world granting meaning and ready-to-handedness through the *Vorgriff* fails, in large part, because *Vorgriff* is grounded *in* the world, which Pannenberg demonstrates is the case not only in Heidegger's writing, but through tracing the origin of the concept to Aristotle, where it explicitly functions in this way.⁴⁷²

If the 'ready-to-hand'-edness of the world is only the result of a cultural construct, which is made out of the world, then 'the world is never able to give a definitive' account of a human's *Bestimmung* in this manner.⁴⁷³ The result of humanity's inability to find a suitable *Bestimmung* through constructs from the world is that every human is pushed to find *Bestimmung* 'beyond every horizon that opens' to him or her.⁴⁷⁴ This experience of moving

⁴⁶⁹ ATP, 22.

⁴⁷⁰ WIM, 6.

⁴⁷¹ Max Scheler, 'The Constitution of the Human Being,' in *The Constitution of the Human Being: From the Posthumous Works, Volumes 11, 12* trans. John Cutting (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008), 129-202.

⁴⁷² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 75-76 (Hereafter MIG).

⁴⁷³ WIM, 7. The German *Bestimmung* can have numerous English equivalents, all of which seem to be at play at various points in Pannenberg's anthropology. The most predominant of which are 'destiny' and 'definition.' See translator's note in WIM, x.

⁴⁷⁴ WIM, 7.

beyond the constructs of humanity Pannenberg labels ‘openness to the world,’ in which each person is ‘completely directed into the “open.”’ He is always open further, beyond every experience and beyond every given situation. He is also open beyond the world,’ to a great destiny (*Bestimmung*).⁴⁷⁵ The language here is clearly that of Arnold Gehlen, who was influenced significantly by Max Scheler. Gehlen, like Pannenberg, argues that the distinguishing factor of humanity is its ‘world openness’ and that humans ‘create’ a world that only then becomes ready-to-hand.⁴⁷⁶ However, rather than examining Gehlen, who is building upon the work of Scheler, let us first examine any additional areas of consonance between Scheler and Pannenberg to gain additional insight.

In agreement with Scheler, Pannenberg notes that, since the cultural constructs of our experience of the world are inadequate, a human is pushed to relate to something beyond the external world.⁴⁷⁷ As Scheler puts it, ‘every man must *needs* have an “object of faith”, and every man performs an act of faith.’⁴⁷⁸ Yet, in contrast to Scheler, Pannenberg does not believe that this drive can be entirely a ‘creation of man’ because, claims Pannenberg, ‘something else always precedes all imaginative activity in the formation of religions.’⁴⁷⁹ Faith, Pannenberg argues elsewhere, must be built upon some basis of knowledge or authentically external encounter; otherwise, it is ‘gullible-ness.’⁴⁸⁰ Eventually, because of the necessity of an external encounter that is required for man to have *Bestimmung*, even the concept of ‘openness to the world’ proves inadequate as Pannenberg suggests it may be

⁴⁷⁵ WIM, 8.

⁴⁷⁶ Arnold Gehlen, *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, trans. Clare McMillan and Karl Pillemer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 337-338.

⁴⁷⁷ WIM, 8-10.

⁴⁷⁸ Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble (London: SCM Press, 1960) 269; italics original.

⁴⁷⁹ WIM, 9-10.

⁴⁸⁰ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Die Offenbarung Gottes in Jesus von Nazareth,’ in *Neuland in der Theologie: Ein Gespräch zwischen amerikanischen und europäischen Theologen* vol. 3: *Theologie als Geschichte*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B Cobb, Jr. (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1967), 164-165.

more profitable to consider Helmuth Plessner's reformulation of Scheler's and Gehlen's concept of *Bestimmung* as the egocentric and exocentric tension within man, rather than openness alone.⁴⁸¹ For Plessner, humans are distinct in that they relate to others through an 'exocentric' relationship of which other animals are incapable. That is, humans can exercise empathy to such an extent that they can understand the other from that person's point of view. Humans share in common with animals an 'egocentric' tendency, understanding others as they relate to one's self from one's own perspective or introspection, yet humans cannot find meaning or authenticity only in themselves.⁴⁸²

It is, in part, this exocentric capacity of humanity that causes Pannenberg to question how the *Dasein* can be understood, for Heidegger, by the *Vorgriff* of one's death.⁴⁸³ Indeed, it seems that there is a circularity to finding one's unity and meaning solely in anticipation of one's very own Being, or, more correctly, the end of one's Being. Instead, human life should be understood as corporate and in community, which Pannenberg correctly notes may find expression in Martin Buber's 'I' and 'Thou' relationship.⁴⁸⁴ To be sure, Heidegger does introduce an 'ecstatic' element that bears some resemblance to this exocentricity, and allows for some connection of *Dasein* to the surrounding elements of *Dasein*'s Being. Yet Heidegger's account is still far too circularly self-focused from Pannenberg's reading. However, for Plessner, the exocentric relationship lacks a concern for the future element and is more concerned with the self confronting its own self (from outside of the self) at the present with no reference to the future.⁴⁸⁵ Pannenberg, along with Heidegger and others, agree that the person existing in the present alone,

⁴⁸¹ ATP, 36-37.

⁴⁸² Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die Philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), 291-292.

⁴⁸³ WIM, 79.

⁴⁸⁴ WIM, 85-90.

⁴⁸⁵ Plessner, *Anthropologie*, 292-293.

without respect to the future, cannot grant the meaning to one's life that Plessner's (and Gehlen's) use of exocentricity promise.

A possible remedy to this may be to engage with Max Scheler's development of the concept via 'spirit.' To be sure, Scheler's move incorporates the concept of a fixed future that confronts the present self exocentrically, and some commentators on Pannenberg's theological anthropology suggest that this is precisely what Pannenberg does.⁴⁸⁶ However, Pannenberg is clear that he cannot follow Scheler's 'spirit' because he finds its application to a holistic theology of history to be far too deterministic with its use of what Pannenberg considers indistinguishable from an Aristotelian 'final cause.'⁴⁸⁷ Instead, Pannenberg moves to provide his own modification of Gehlen's anthropology, focusing upon Gehlen's use of 'action.'

For Gehlen, 'it is crucial for man's survival that his needs and impulses function in the direction of *action*, knowledge, and *anticipation*'; only in this way can the human truly relate to the external world.⁴⁸⁸ This is not to say that Plessner's emphasis on the present reality is altogether mistaken, only that both an immediate and future orientation are needed. As Gehlen puts it,

Man must possess the ability to break through the boundaries of an immediate situation, to direct himself toward the future and what is not present, and to act accordingly.... Man thereby becomes "Prometheus," simultaneously planning ahead and taking action.⁴⁸⁹

Humanity can embrace *Bestimmung*, suggests Gehlen, through applying present knowledge toward anticipation. For Gehlen, taking such action allows

⁴⁸⁶ F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 133-134; and F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), ch. 3

⁴⁸⁷ ATP, 38-41.

⁴⁸⁸ Gehlen, *Man*, 44-45, italics added.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 41. The reference to Prometheus may be a passing one to Nietzsche or Marx, though Ernst Bloch, who will be discussed below, suggests Nietzsche and Marx both may have derived it from Schelling's lectures that eventually comprised the latter's *Spätphilosophie*. See Ernst Bloch, *Zwischen-Welten in der Philosophie-Geschichte in Ernst Bloch Gesamtausgabe* vol. 12 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 315-318.

humanity to relate both to the ‘external world’ as it is and toward a ‘common future’ as a result of the exocentric aspect to human existence.⁴⁹⁰ Yet Pannenberg’s eventual development of the idea that humanity finds identity in future oriented action has roots that extend beyond Gehlen, in Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder was, according to Pannenberg, the first to seriously present an evolutionary-based anthropology that also exhibited a scepticism that human nature could perfect itself without the need for an intervening external force.⁴⁹¹ To be sure, Herder still claimed that perfection was possible, gained, in part, through rigorous education, but it was Herder’s introduction of the idea of God as providing the impetus for humanity’s self-improvement that stands as an important development for Pannenberg.⁴⁹²

Herder grounds his view of humanity in evolution, one which he describes as necessarily taking into account cosmic history prior to humanity, but he nevertheless suggests that God intervenes to supply additional instincts in humanity that are not present in other creatures.⁴⁹³ Mankind was not left ‘to murderous chance,’ as Herder puts it, because a thing ‘cannot fashion itself.’⁴⁹⁴ Instead, God made us predisposed toward an unseen end that is not yet present, a future destiny.⁴⁹⁵ The result is that, as Herder puts it, ‘we are not yet men, but are daily *becoming* so.’⁴⁹⁶

Herder acknowledged that human perfection requires an external motivating factor, something that makes him slightly more sceptical of humanity’s inherent ability than his predecessors. Yet Pannenberg notes that

⁴⁹⁰ Gehlen, *Man*, 42, 45.

⁴⁹¹ ATP, 50-53.

⁴⁹² ATP, 44-46.

⁴⁹³ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Berman Publishers, 1966), 229-230.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 439-441.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229, italics original.

Herder ‘underestimated’ the destructive nature of sin. Herder understood morally evil people to be a disfiguration of humanity, and not as a ‘destructive contradiction of their very humanness itself.’⁴⁹⁷ Positively, Pannenberg notes that the common theme among Herder, Gehlen, and Plessner is an internal drive toward that which is beyond the self, a necessary aspect of anthropology.⁴⁹⁸

Drawing from this and his earlier work, Pannenberg contends that the human person is both historical and ‘exocentric’ to the point of being open not only to the world, but something beyond its present existence. For Pannenberg, this means that an authentic existence for an individual can only be found in some other future beyond the finite world of an individual’s life.⁴⁹⁹ If this is not the case, then the result is a highly subjective view of humanity, one that changes for each person—the very thing Pannenberg rejects from Heidegger’s account of *Dasein*.⁵⁰⁰ Instead, authentic existence relies upon the unity of humanity, which in turn relies upon the unity of cosmic history. As Pannenberg puts it, ‘because human beings are exocentric beings who experience themselves only via their world, they can become aware of the unity of their own *Dasein* only along with the unity of the world.’⁵⁰¹ For Pannenberg, the unity of the present world must rest outside that present, and not merely in the ‘narration’ of individual history, as is the case in Dilthey’s scheme.⁵⁰² Dilthey was correct to emphasise that historical knowledge can only come at the end of an event, or else the event loses its contingent and open character, but, because of the interwovenness of an individual with society, as discussed in the previous chapter, the unity that is

⁴⁹⁷ ATP, 58.

⁴⁹⁸ ATP, 66-72.

⁴⁹⁹ ATP, 486.

⁵⁰⁰ ATP, 502.

⁵⁰¹ ATP, 516.

⁵⁰² ATP, 505-510.

needed for any individual's life can only be known at the end of cosmic history itself.⁵⁰³

The difficulty comes, of course, in the fact that the 'end of history' is inaccessible to finite humans. It occurs outside 'the stream of [*individual*] history.'⁵⁰⁴ Thus, a finite person can only find knowledge of his or her historical self in that which is beyond the finite. No anticipation of death, as in Heidegger, is sufficient, as such an account is still grounded in the finitude of humanity.⁵⁰⁵ Mere anticipation is insufficient, as it is still grounded in the finitude of humanity. Instead, faith as trust in something external and authentically existing must serve as the grounding for a thoroughgoing anthropology.⁵⁰⁶ An individual's death serves not to unify history, but only further fragment human existence, while God acts as the one who unifies the fragmented existence of each particular history into a single unified history.⁵⁰⁷ In this way, God acts as the unifying reality for all of history.

Yet by referring to God as the unifying reality Pannenberg treads very close to determinism, since, by suggesting a present unity to history, it suggests that future events may already be settled within that unity.⁵⁰⁸ Pannenberg, believes he may avoid this problem by speaking of God as existing solely in the future. Thus, 'God is...no object' in the present reality upon which to fix trust.⁵⁰⁹ The relationship between a unifying and fixed 'end of history,' that serves to unify all of history thus granting humanity authentic

⁵⁰³ ATP, 507-513.

⁵⁰⁴ ATP, 510; as noted in chapter two, the end must nevertheless be part of history.

⁵⁰⁵ MIG, 86-87.

⁵⁰⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Stellengnahme zur Diskussion,' in *Neuland* 3, 320-323; 324n.

⁵⁰⁷ Pannenberg, 'Die Offenbarung Gottes,' 168-169; WIM, 79.

⁵⁰⁸ See Allan Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973), 97; Jacqui A. Stewart, *Reconstructing Science and Theology in Postmodernity: Pannenberg, Ethics and the Human Sciences* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 151-152; William Drees, 'Contingency, Time and the Theological Ambiguity of Science,' in *Beginning with the End: God, Science and Wolfhart Pannenberg* ed. C.R Albright and K. Haugen (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 241-242; Mostert, *God and the Future*, 131-142.

⁵⁰⁹ WIM 38.

existence, will be explored at the end of this chapter and throughout the following two chapters. For now, we may note that Pannenberg's future orientation is not merely a recapitulation of the futurity found in Dilthey and Heidegger.⁵¹⁰ The future to which Pannenberg looks extends beyond that suggested by either Dilthey or Heidegger to include all of humanity.

We may summarise Pannenberg's anthropology by arguing that an individual person finds authentic existence only in the future of God's unification of history. Therefore, it is not merely in 'openness to the world,' but in 'openness to the future' that is beyond all historical times where mankind can locate 'his destiny, which is community with God.'⁵¹¹ Still, as discussed above, it is not merely imagination or anticipation of the future, but actual trust in the future as an already defined event that must serve to ground the individual's own Being at present. Humans, as historical beings, must therefore encounter the future God in the midst of history. This is done, argues Pannenberg, through Jesus Christ, where the infinite meets the finite.⁵¹²

2 Christology

2.1 Beginning From Below

In relation to Christology, Pannenberg does not go the route typically taken by dogmatic theologians, which seeks to explain how the infinite became a finite person. If meaning is to be found historically, and if by historical we mean not only *Geschichte* but also *Historie*, then our Christology cannot be what is typically labelled 'from above.' Additionally, according to Pannenberg, the typical 'from above' Christology does not say much constructive. Since it presupposes the divinity of Jesus, the very thing, according to Pannenberg, that is the goal of Christology. It also presupposes the viewpoint of God and thus can only speak speculatively, never saying

⁵¹⁰ Contra Stewart, *Reconstructing*, 80-82; and David McKenzie, *Wolfhart Pannenberg and Religious Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), 124-125.

⁵¹¹ WIM, 54-55.

⁵¹² WIM, 146-147.

anything definitive.⁵¹³ While one may say that such a Christology merely has faith as its starting point, without some sort of external justification, Pannenberg argues that such faith is the height of gullibility, in terms discussed above with respect to anthropology.⁵¹⁴ In keeping with Pannenberg's argument that theology, understood as a science, must engage in a new methodology, grounded in history, Jesus should be known first as the historical person. It is only 'in the light of the historical particularity of Jesus himself' that we can begin to understand God.⁵¹⁵

While Pannenberg acknowledges that his is not the first 'from below' Christology, noting Albrecht Ritschl and Bultmann as significant predecessors, he also claims that such Christologies often lose a strong sense of the divine, which is better preserved in 'from above' Christology, or else take soteriology as their starting point, thus simply pushing the question of gullible faith back one step.⁵¹⁶ Indeed, these criticisms that Pannenberg notes of prior Christologies 'from below' parallel those made of his own position by Colin Gunton.⁵¹⁷ However, it is a mistake to categorize Pannenberg's attempt together with other prior attempts at a Christology 'from below.' For example, in distinction from both Ritschl and Bultmann, Pannenberg argues that soteriology cannot be the beginning of Christology since 'the divinity of Jesus remains the *presupposition* for his saving significance for us and, conversely, the saving significance of his divinity is the reason why we take *interest* in the question of his divinity.'⁵¹⁸ While there may be a presupposition of Jesus' saving work that causes us to embark on a Christology, such a presupposition

⁵¹³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), 34-35. (Hereafter JGM)

⁵¹⁴ Also, Pannenberg, 'Die Offenbarung Gottes,' 164-165.

⁵¹⁵ JGM, 36.

⁵¹⁶ JGM, 39-47.

⁵¹⁷ Colin Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study in Continuities of Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 21-23, 26-27. Gunton goes so far as to say all such Christologies deny 'Chalcedonian duality' of God and man in Christ.

⁵¹⁸ JGM, 38.

must be justified.⁵¹⁹ That is, we cannot argue from his saving work to his divinity, because the saving work of Jesus is predicated upon his divinity. To reverse the order, as is done in the ‘from below’ Christologies that Pannenberg surveys, is fallacious on a fundamental level. Thus we must take interest in Jesus as historical person first, independent of his saving significance.⁵²⁰

At this point, it should be noted that Pannenberg’s ‘from below’ methodology is not as radical in *Jesus-God and Man* as it is often labelled.⁵²¹ While it is true that the historical figure Jesus acts as his starting point, Pannenberg is unwilling to discount every aspect of ‘from above’ Christology, going to the point of noting that ‘one cannot claim that the incarnational Christology which has ruled the history of the development of Christological doctrine was simply a mistake.’⁵²² Thus, contrary to the often-cited study by Elizabeth Johnson, there was no radical shift between the first and fifth German editions of *Grundzüge der Christologie*.⁵²³ The afterword to the fifth German edition is, by Pannenberg’s own admission, merely a clarification that ‘from below’ Christology is merely the overarching framework from which the book begins.⁵²⁴ Instead, Pannenberg’s Christology has always been one that moves ‘from below’ to encompass the claims of a ‘from above’ Christology—he begins epistemically ‘from below’ to arrive at a more comprehensive, and more firmly argued, ‘from above’ position. The question remains, though, as to whether Pannenberg can give the appropriate historical grounding for the future presence of God in Jesus, thus preserving ‘Chalcedonian duality.’ Said differently, is Pannenberg justified in moving

⁵¹⁹ JGM, 49.

⁵²⁰ JGM, 47-48.

⁵²¹ As in Gunton, *Yesterday and Today*, see above.

⁵²² JGM, 35.

⁵²³ Elizabeth Johnson, ‘The Ongoing Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,’ *Horizons* 9, no. 2 (1982): 237-250.

⁵²⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Afterward,’ trans. Duane A. Preibe, in *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 400.

from ‘from below’ historical study of Jesus to ‘from above’ presuppositions regarding the future divine presence in Jesus?

2.2 The Resurrection of Jesus

Pannenberg argues that, in the historical person of Jesus, the future of God has already appeared. However, contrary to the arguments of the majority of those in the revitalized Quest for the Historical Jesus, Pannenberg argues that the future is not present most fundamentally in the message of Jesus.⁵²⁵ To be sure, there is certainly an eschatological emphasis present in the message of Jesus, and the emphasis on the future characteristic of Jesus’ preaching, as noted by Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, is a correct one.⁵²⁶ Yet, for the future oriented message of Jesus to have any validity, it must have a future confirmation.⁵²⁷ In other words, an eschatological event is required to confirm the eschatological message of Jesus and his claim to authority. It is precisely at this point that Pannenberg begins to make a radical claim.

Pannenberg argues that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the both the confirmation of his message, and the eschatological end-of-the-world event where God meets humanity.⁵²⁸ In Jesus ‘the unity of history is established by the appearance of the end of all events through God’s revelation.’⁵²⁹ This unity occurs in Jesus fundamentally in his historical resurrection.⁵³⁰ As Pannenberg puts it in the context of his Christology, ‘if Jesus has been raised, then the end of the world has begun.’⁵³¹ The argument here is twofold.

⁵²⁵ JGM, 55-56, 58-63.

⁵²⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 2 ed. John McIntyre and Ian T. Ramsey, trans. George H. Kehm (London: SCM Press, 1967), 237. (Hereafter BQT2)

⁵²⁷ JGM, 63-65.

⁵²⁸ JGM, 66.

⁵²⁹ WIM, 148.

⁵³⁰ Pannenberg, ‘Die Offenbarung Gottes,’ 163.

⁵³¹ JGM, 67.

First, Pannenberg makes the case that the resurrection of Jesus, if it actually occurred, could best be understood by the early church as an eschatological event. According to Pannenberg,

Jesus' expectation [of future confirmation] was not directed toward...a privately experienced resurrection for the dead, but toward the imminent universal resurrection of the dead.... Then when his disciples were confronted by the resurrected Jesus, they no doubt understood this as the beginning of the universal resurrection of the dead, as the beginning of the events of the end of history.⁵³²

In other words, the resurrection of Jesus was first understood in the context of Jewish apocalypticism that saw a general resurrection of the dead as an occurrence at the end of the world. Only later, continues Pannenberg, would the disciples argue that the resurrection of Jesus was a unique event that stands distinct from the general resurrection of the dead.⁵³³

The second part of the argument is historical in nature. In order for Pannenberg to affirm the unity of *Historie* and *Geschichte* and the necessity of a 'from below' Christology, Pannenberg must make the case that the resurrection is verifiable *as an historical event*. Pannenberg offers such a proof in *Jesus—God and Man*, and then expands upon it in a later essay.⁵³⁴ I will not take the time here to give an analysis of Pannenberg's historical argument for our purpose in this thesis is not to validate the claim that resurrection actually did occur historically, but to see how this claim relates to our purpose of building an historical theology in order to address the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. Indeed, given the conditions of verification that Pannenberg himself lays out, it is difficult to suggest that we do have much epistemic basis for accepting this claim. Still, we might

⁵³² JGM, 66.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ JGM, 88-106; Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'The Historical Reality of the Resurrection,' in *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie*, vol 1: *Philosophie, Religion, Offenbarung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), 319-326.

understand the underlying thrust of his claim to be that, at the very least, the resurrection of Jesus is subject to historical scrutiny and acts as the primary historical grounding for the method of the discipline of theology as a science. As Pannenberg says more plainly elsewhere, Jesus' resurrection must 'be taken seriously, historically speaking.'⁵³⁵

Rather than distinct from anthropology, though, such a Christology gives the needed grounding for the anthropology. If the authentic Being of *Dasein* is established by the unity of history given at history's end, then it becomes vitally important for our self-understanding that the end of history has appeared in the resurrection of Jesus. 'The unity of history is established,' Pannenberg concludes his initial anthropology, 'by the appearance of the end of all events through God's revelation in Jesus.'⁵³⁶ Said again in his Christology, 'as God's revelation, Jesus is at the same time the revelation of human nature and of the destiny [*Bestimmung*] of man.'⁵³⁷ Not only is the destiny of humanity revealed, but the ultimate revelation of God himself is found in the resurrection of Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus, for Pannenberg, thus proves to be revelatory and salvific. It is revelatory in that it confirms Jesus' eschatological message of the Kingdom of God and establishes the unity of Jesus with God the father, and that, in the person of Jesus, we have seen the fullness of God understood as historical actor. That is, Jesus did not suddenly become the Son of God, but was revealed historically to have always been the Son.⁵³⁸ In this way we may say that Jesus as historical person is *epistemically* prior to us, while Jesus as the pre-existent logos is *ontologically* prior for us.

The conflation of the ontological and the epistemic, that which is the case and the way we know that it is the case, respectively, is a common

⁵³⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles Creed in Light of Today's Questions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1974), 104.

⁵³⁶ WIM, 148.

⁵³⁷ JGM, 191.

⁵³⁸ JGM, 115-120, 150-158.

problem in critiques of Pannenberg's methodology here.⁵³⁹ The human understanding that builds our hypothesis must begin with the finite and only then move toward the infinite, though never actually obtaining it. However, this does not negate the ontological priority of Christ's existence as the Son 'eternally begotten' prior to the historical observation of the man Jesus. The resurrection does not make Jesus into God, but reveals that it had already been the case that God was in Jesus, reconciling the world to himself.

Further, it is the resurrection that is salvific for Pannenberg, and not, and least not directly, the cross.⁵⁴⁰ Pannenberg explicitly rejects the traditional idea of substitutionary atonement as well as satisfaction theories of the atonement.⁵⁴¹ Instead a modified substitutionary atonement model, that takes into account anthropology, is given. For Pannenberg, all humanity, in all times and places, is, by Jesus' actions, placed before 'the God who is coming.'⁵⁴²

In the resurrection, Jesus is not understood as a determining force that of necessity brings the world into relation with God; Jesus '*is not the law, but the reconciler of the cosmos.*'⁵⁴³ Pannenberg brings the concepts with which this chapter has been concerned, anthropology, Christology and history, together in a description of the redemptive effects of Jesus' resurrection:

The world process as a whole, however, is a unique succession of events. Its entire set of interrelationships cannot, therefore, be understood in terms of law.... Because the total process of the world is a unique and irreversible course of events, even contemporary natural science does not speak of this total process as the test case of a law embracing the whole, but speaks of a history of nature.... Therefore, one can probably speak of a history of nature only with reference to man—who belongs to nature himself, after all—but hardly apart from man.

⁵³⁹ Including the one by Gunton, noted above.

⁵⁴⁰ JGM, 111.

⁵⁴¹ JGM, 195, 220-221.

⁵⁴² JGM, 243-244.

⁵⁴³ JGM, 395, italics original.

However, because the history of mankind achieves unity only light of the eschatological revelation of God in Jesus Christ, in the final analysis it is Jesus who embraces the world process into the unity of a history⁵⁴⁴

Thus, Jesus grants a unity to the ‘world process’ of events, and to humanity itself. The future is laid out before each individual, but it is ‘only he who gives up his life for the ultimate, eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God that has appeared in Jesus [*who*] will find his life ultimately saved.’⁵⁴⁵ Yet this only introduces further avenues that require explanation. In particular, the relationship between our present and God’s eternity, as well as the eschatological end that unifies the world-process of history, as well as particular individuals, must be further explored. Chapter six will revisit the doctrine of salvation in Pannenberg’s theology of history and interpret it in light of the development of the concept of the ‘end of history’ and the temporal field of history.

3 Time and Eternity

3.1 The Kingdom of God as Eschatological Kingdom and Present Reality

Pannenberg continues his discussion of the end of history and its meaning for the Christian at present in a group of essays published together as *Theology and the Kingdom of God*.⁵⁴⁶ This work, of course, must be taken in light of Pannenberg’s statements on the resurrection of Jesus, which, as has been established, was the ‘unique break-in of the reality of the end-time’ into our history.⁵⁴⁷ The impact of the in-breaking of the future into human history, as well as some of the additional influences upon Pannenberg with respect to his emphasis on futurity, will be examined in this section.

⁵⁴⁴ JGM, 395.

⁵⁴⁵ JGM, 396.

⁵⁴⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969) (hereafter, TKG).

⁵⁴⁷ Pannenberg, *Apostles Creed*, 109.

Pannenberg opens this work by observing that much of twentieth century theology has been eschatological in nature. Yet Pannenberg observes that while dialectical theology used eschatology as a ‘slogan,’ it remains that ‘for Bultmann and for the young Barth, Jesus’ eschatology is timeless and deprived of its temporal meaning. Dialectical theology disregarded Jesus’ message about the Kingdom of God as an expectation regarding the concrete future.’⁵⁴⁸

Elsewhere, Pannenberg credits Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer with rediscovering the eschatological emphasis of Jesus’ message.⁵⁴⁹ Schweitzer’s claim was insufficiently developed, though, as it focused on the message of Jesus rather than the fact of the resurrection, eventually becoming dehistoricized by dialectical theologians on the one hand, while Weiss’s claim follows a pathway nearly identical to Herder when he argues that ‘the Kingdom of God will be established’ by human effort. Instead, argues Pannenberg, it will be brought about ‘by God alone. The coming of the Kingdom will involve cosmic revolutions and change far beyond anything conceivable as a consequence of man’s progressive labor.’⁵⁵⁰ For Pannenberg, the Kingdom of God is ‘ontologically grounded’ in the future, thus also giving primacy to an authentic and concrete future.⁵⁵¹

As already intimated in this chapter, the ‘imminent Kingdom of God,’ understood as future, ‘precedes every Christology and every new qualification of human existence and thus becomes the foundation for both.’⁵⁵² In light of the resurrection as the confirmation of God’s future presence in the historic person of Jesus, more can be said about the relationship between God’s future and human existence. ‘Only in light of this future’ of God’s imminent Kingdom

⁵⁴⁸ TKG, 52.

⁵⁴⁹ BQT2, 237.

⁵⁵⁰ TKG, 52.

⁵⁵¹ BQT2, 237, 239-241; TKG, 54.

⁵⁵² TKG, 52-53.

can we understand man and his history. God's rule is not simply in the future, leaving men to do nothing but wait quietly for its arrival. No, it is a mark of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God that the future and present are inextricably interwoven.⁵⁵³

Thus, contrary to Oscar Cullman, for Pannenberg, the Kingdom of God is not merely inaugurated now to be fulfilled at some later date, but is a future that is imminently here in the message of Christ for Pannenberg.⁵⁵⁴

The result, then, is something of a reversal of causality. If the future is present in the message of the Kingdom of God, confirmed at the resurrection, and God's Kingdom or his rule as God is eschatological, then, by virtue of the end being already present, causation flows not from past to future, but in the opposite direction.⁵⁵⁵ However, Pannenberg is well aware of the difficulty that such a reversal to the flow of causation can have for the idea of human freedom, and so must qualify it extensively, as the rest of this chapter will do as it also explores the implications this has for the present existence of God.

Pannenberg expounds upon his meaning here by initially noting that, in ancient mythologies, the gods were identical with their power. In the same way, Pannenberg argues, the Christian 'God's being and existence cannot be conceived apart from his rule.'⁵⁵⁶ The result of such a line of thinking is that, for Pannenberg, 'it is necessary to say that, in a restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist. Since his rule and his being are inseparable, God's being is still in the process of coming to be.'⁵⁵⁷ This radical claim, which will be revisited in the next two chapters as well, would mean that in the same 'restricted but important sense,' Pannenberg's theology amounts to a kind of atheistic Christianity. To help make sense of this, let us turn to the atheistic

⁵⁵³ TKG, 53.

⁵⁵⁴ TKG, 54.

⁵⁵⁵ TKG, 54.

⁵⁵⁶ TKG, 55.

⁵⁵⁷ TKG, 56.

philosopher of hope, Ernst Bloch, who was highly influential upon Pannenberg's own eschatology.

3.2 'Atheist Christians'

Ernst Bloch, in the frontpiece to his work *Atheismus im Christentum*, states that 'only an atheist can be a good Christian; only a Christian can be a good atheist.'⁵⁵⁸ While Bloch's utopian philosophy has had considerable impact upon twentieth century theology, the impact of his philosophy is particularly relevant as it pertains to the theologies of both Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann. Pannenberg later admits that it is Bloch's philosophy that he had in mind during much of the composition of the titular essay in *Theology and the Kingdom of God*.⁵⁵⁹ Given the admitted influence of Bloch upon Pannenberg, it will be helpful to briefly analyse some areas of congruence.

Similar to Pannenberg, Bloch decries the demythologizing of the biblical text done by Bultmann. Instead, Bloch argues 'we do not cry out for the bible to be "demythologized" to its "kerygma" but for it be *detheocratized*, and so make the bible a saving text.'⁵⁶⁰ Jesus was the Messiah bringing in the Utopian Kingdom, continues Bloch, but not in an 'otherworldly' sense. Instead, he sought to bring a concrete future utopia in the present now.⁵⁶¹ Jesus, Bloch argues, was a type of Prometheus, giving freedom to the masses, but overtaken by those around him. While Prometheus was bound in chains, Jesus was crucified upon wood.⁵⁶² Nevertheless through Jesus' 'Vor-scheinen'

⁵⁵⁸ Ernst Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum: Zur Religion des Exodus und des Reichs*, vol. 3 in *Ernst Bloch Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968).

⁵⁵⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology*, ed. Niels Henrich Gregerson (Philadelphia: Templeton Press, 2007), 54.

⁵⁶⁰ Bloch, *Atheismus*, 111. German: nicht »Entmythologisierung« sei's Panier, gar eine ohne Unterscheidung von Prometheus - und Baal - von dem »Kerygma«, sondern *Enttheokratisierung* läßt in der Bibel ihrem zu rettenden Text gerecht werden.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 178-180.

⁵⁶² Ernst Bloch, *Experimentum Mundi: Frage Kateforien des Herausbringen Praxis*, vol. 15 in *Ernst Bloch Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), 208.

(fore-seeing), and the title ‘Son of Man,’ he is able to simultaneously identify with humanity and bring the concrete utopian future to them.⁵⁶³ For Bloch, there is an authenticity and concreteness to the *Vor-scheinen* that makes a claim upon the present by virtue of its concrete nature.

The language of fore-seeing, is built upon the same linguistic root that Pannenberg utilises in his analysis of ‘Appearance as the Arrival of the Future.’ There, Pannenberg, though he uses the unhyphenated ‘*Erscheinen*,’ begins with an etymology reminiscent of Heidegger, on the one hand, but more so of Bloch’s use of ‘*Vor-scheinen*,’ on the other.⁵⁶⁴ Heidegger uses appearance, ‘*Vor-scheinen*,’ to mean the ‘announcement’ of Being, but not the actual presence of Being or any authentic existence of *Dasein*, which, as already discussed, finds its greatest fulfilment in the future.⁵⁶⁵ In contrast to Heidegger, Pannenberg argues that the already authentic and concrete existence of a future reality is ‘identical’ with its present appearance, though he admits there is still a being or essence beyond this appearance.⁵⁶⁶ Here, Pannenberg has moved closer to Bloch than Heidegger. Yet Pannenberg modifies the idea of *Vorscheinen* toward a yet different goal that does not entail an eschatological atheism.⁵⁶⁷

Still, in both Pannenberg and Bloch, it remains that the future brings about the past and present in a contingent manner. For Bloch, this means that the future creates the present while still functioning as an ‘open system,’ an idea that can be traced back to Friedrich Schelling, for whom Bloch expressed admiration.⁵⁶⁸ Pannenberg, in contrast, argues that there is an intentionality to

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 206-207; hyphenation original to Bloch.

⁵⁶⁴ TKG, 127-130.

⁵⁶⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 52-55; (H. 29-32);

⁵⁶⁶ TKG, 131-132.

⁵⁶⁷ So Peter Steinacker, ‘Der verkleinerte Held—Gott in höchster Menschennähe. Überlegungen zur Wirkung Blochs auf die Christologie,’ in *Ernst Blochs Vermittlungen zur Theologie*, ed. Hermann Deuser and Peter Steinacker (München: Chr Kaiser, 1983), 188-189.

⁵⁶⁸ John Miller Jones, *Assembling (Post)modernism: The Utopian Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 72-73, 87.

the future's actions, something absent in Bloch, that does not compromise the 'contingency of present events' if one views this in light of faithfulness as understood to describe the Christian God.⁵⁶⁹ For Pannenberg, 'the future is not an empty category,' but is occupied by a subject who relates to our present as it is now: God.⁵⁷⁰

3.3 Redefining the Term 'God'

Returning to the fundamental problem of our thesis, Pannenberg argues that the existence of God in his complete omnipotence at the present would destroy any hint of human freedom. This means that God, in his fullness, as the 'absolute in the mode of being present at hand is no longer thinkable.'⁵⁷¹ This line of thought, taken together with Pannenberg's earlier claim that 'God does not yet exist,' suggests, among other things, that we must redefine what we mean by 'God,' if the term is to have any positive use in the present.⁵⁷² Therefore, reasons Pannenberg, we should not be 'surprised or embarrassed' by the atheistic claim that God is not here. 'Obviously, if the mode of God's being is interlocked with the coming of his rule,' then it stands 'that God cannot be "found" somewhere in the present reality.'⁵⁷³ Giving an ontological priority to the future instead of the present, though gives 'the word "God"...a new concreteness,' found solely in the future.⁵⁷⁴ Pannenberg may reject the atheism of Bloch in the absolute sense, but there remains a 'hidden God' that exists in an absolute sense only at history's end.⁵⁷⁵

This does not mean, though, that we conceive of God only as the 'power from the future.' One must still hold to the contingency of the future in

⁵⁶⁹ TKG, 142; BQT2, 237.

⁵⁷⁰ TKG, 56.

⁵⁷¹ BQT2, 241-243.

⁵⁷² BQT2, 241.

⁵⁷³ TKG, 56.

⁵⁷⁴ TKG, 56.

⁵⁷⁵ BQT2, 241.

order to preserve the category of future *as* future. To speak of the future is speak of something which is open and contingent.⁵⁷⁶ For Pannenberg, such a ‘contingency of events [*of the future*] is a crucial presupposition for understanding the future as personal, and to speak of God is to speak of a personal power.’⁵⁷⁷ Rather than de-personalising our understanding of God, as one might assume speaking of God from the future would do, the future personalises God, as I explain below. It is, at least in part, for this reason that Pannenberg notes ‘the idea of the future as a mode of God’s being is still undeveloped in theology despite the intimate connection between God and the coming reign of God in the eschatological message of Jesus.’⁵⁷⁸ For our purposes, this means that God’s sovereignty and human freedom are no longer to be considered as two distinct theological claims, both of which must be independently supported before forming a consonance with each other. Instead, God can only exist as sovereign God from the future, and still be a personal God, if humans are free at the present and in the time leading up to that future.

Pannenberg elaborates. To understand events as contingent is a necessary condition for understanding God as personal. If an event is contingent and not personal then our description of history may simply ‘refer to the apparently erratic character of happenings.’⁵⁷⁹ Still, contingency is not enough to assume a ‘personal quality’ to events. ‘The required additional factor is the identity of the power that is operative in a series of contingent events, a *unity* behind contingent self-expressions. This unity acquires identity by exhibiting some meaningful connection in the sequence of events.’⁵⁸⁰ Thus, for the Christian, ‘the future is neither empty category nor bundle of chances. It also presupposes that there is a single future for all events. To speak of the

⁵⁷⁶ TKG, 57.

⁵⁷⁷ TKG, 57.

⁵⁷⁸ BQT2, 242.

⁵⁷⁹ TKG, 58.

⁵⁸⁰ TKG, 58; italics added.

definitive unity of the world means that all events are moving ahead to meet, finally, a common future.⁵⁸¹ The extent to which we can speak of a contingent future when God already exists as the common future of all creation will continue to be addressed, but more explicitly in the coming two chapters.

From Pannenberg's claim, we can conclude that unity is established, at least in part, by the commonality of the future for all entities. This is the case because the future that confronts each person now in his or her particularity is also the same future that confronted all previous past events. If God is the future of those events and us, then God acts to provide a sort of unity by God's very being.⁵⁸²

This unity is only possible as a personal unity, that is as a unity that results from non-random events, if God is taken to be that unity to which all creatures at all times are confronted. The Kingdom of God, as Jesus' eschatological message, 'implies that the unity of the world is be expected from its future' and this is not 'in terms of an eternal cosmos but as something to be achieved by a process of reconciling previous schisms and contradictions. Reconciliation is a constitutive aspect of creation.'⁵⁸³ It is in this way that the future creates the present and past, and thus has ontological priority, by reconciling all events into a unity. In doing so, God, as the personal power of the future, establishes his sovereignty, but not in a way to disrupt the freedom of creatures. Pannenberg explains that

Three ideas are essential here: unity, the future, and sovereignty. Sovereignty establishes unity. The coming of God to his sovereignty over the world is his gift to the world, unifying its scattered events. The coming of God also means that God has the power over the future of those who are under his rule.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸¹ TKG, 59.

⁵⁸² TKG, 61-62.

⁵⁸³ TKG, 60.

⁵⁸⁴ TKG, 59-60.

History is moving toward a unity, and this unity is established by God's rule. That is 'unity and power belong together.'⁵⁸⁵ God does not exist in his fullness at present, then, because God is a personal power and God has yet to establish that power through the unification of all events. Still, it does not remain that God does not commit actions in history, despite not existing in his fullness as God.⁵⁸⁶

For Pannenberg, God's primary, or absolute, existence as the personal power from the future 'does not mean that God is only in the future and was not in the past or is not in the present.'⁵⁸⁷ Instead God, as eternal being, exerts a causal influence upon the presently existing world, all the while not presently existing himself because, as has been mentioned, were God to be fully manifest in his infinite sovereignty presently, it would not leave room for individual freedom of finite creatures. As Pannenberg states

If God is to be thought of in this way as the future event of even the most distant past, then he existed before our present and before every present, although he will definitively demonstrate his deity only in the future of his kingdom. He existed as the future that has been powerful in every present. Thus, the futurity of God implies his eternity. But it is one thing to conceive eternity as timelessness or as the endless endurance of something that existed since the beginning of time, and quite another to think of it as the power of the future over every present.⁵⁸⁸

For God, then, 'eternity is not timeless.'⁵⁸⁹

Instead, Pannenberg's conception of eternity necessarily includes time. In redefining God as the personal power of the future, Pannenberg moves to redefine eternity as well. Eternity 'is moved into a larger understanding of

⁵⁸⁵ TKG, 60.

⁵⁸⁶ TKG, 60.

⁵⁸⁷ TKG, 62.

⁵⁸⁸ BQT2, 244.

⁵⁸⁹ TKG, 62.

reality that does not omit the temporal dynamics from the idea of eternity.’⁵⁹⁰ Robert John Russell describes this aspect of Pannenberg’s theology as a ‘temporal thickness’ to eternity.⁵⁹¹ Time does not stop, but takes on a new character at the end of history. Russell’s interpretation of Eternity will be explored in more detail at toward the end of this chapter.

For now, the salient point is that one need not give up the historical action of God by describing the temporal context of his existence as ‘eternal.’ Rather, it is the case, argues Pannenberg, that past, present, and future are unified together in the ‘ultimate eschatological future,’ and by this unification God may act as the God of the future of every past event.⁵⁹² The way that God is able to both act upon temporal events, and by doing so exert his power as Creator, and unify everything as the God of the future can only be considered possible if we understand God’s actions as either determinative, or motivated from love.

3.4 God is Love

For Pannenberg, Jesus’ message of the eschatological Kingdom of God is ‘that the creative power of the future is conceivable only if we understand its actuality in terms of love.’⁵⁹³ The reason God is characterised as love in Jesus’ message is that ‘the present announcement of the imminent Kingdom of God offers man a chance to participate in God’s future rather than being overwhelmed by its sudden arrival and being conquered as an adversary of that future.’⁵⁹⁴ Love is necessarily relational and redemptive, on the one hand, and creative on the other.

Love is creative, Pannenberg states, because it is the only valid answer to the question ‘why should there be anything at all rather than nothing?’

⁵⁹⁰ TKG, 63.

⁵⁹¹ Robert John Russell, *Time and Eternity: Pannenberg, Physics, and Eschatology in Creative Interaction* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 13.

⁵⁹² TKG, 63-64.

⁵⁹³ TKG, 64.

⁵⁹⁴ TKG, 64-65.

because ‘love grants existence and grants it contingently.’⁵⁹⁵ Heidegger’s foundational question can only find its answer in the love that comes from the future, for only in this way can God be said to exert his continuous creation without compromising their contingency, as noted in the first chapter and as will be revisited in chapter six. This is love ‘understood not in a vague emotional way but as the creative release of new reality’ that, by doing so, allows us to speak of contingent events, particularly those of the future, as already related to the world.⁵⁹⁶ That is, God relates to the present by lovingly intending the future of presently contingent events. ‘The [*present*] reality of God, then, is the creative arrival of this powerful future in the event of love.’⁵⁹⁷ Love creates, and sustains creation, without overwhelming contingency by relating to it in the event of love. This relational and, subsequently, redemptive action of divine love is inextricably tied to God as the personal power of the future as well.

It is relational because it offers man a chance to enter into communion with God: ‘In Jesus’ message it is only *as future that God is present*,’ and this divine absence is felt by humanity in the present reality.⁵⁹⁸ Yet in the divine action of love, present humanity can relate to the future God. Communion with God is itself the redemption of the world. Pannenberg argues that a unity will be established by God at history’s end, and, by the message of the Kingdom of God, humanity is offered an opportunity to experience that unity, and so experience the divine whose absence has been otherwise felt.⁵⁹⁹ Thus, humanity does not simply face the future, but must relate to the future as either friend or as enemy. Enmity to the future is sin, while communion with the God of the future is the offer of redemption. This is means that which relates

⁵⁹⁵ TKG, 65; Pannenberg does explicitly reference Heidegger’s (and others’) question here.

⁵⁹⁶ TKG, 68.

⁵⁹⁷ TKG, 70.

⁵⁹⁸ TKG, 68, italics original.

⁵⁹⁹ TKG, 67-68.

to the God of the future can be said to have genuinely existed both presently and at all previous times.⁶⁰⁰

God as the personal power of the future does not exist in the absolute sense except at the end of history. His presence can only be felt or related to if the end of history has in fact occurred since this is where God most fully exists. As Pannenberg states it in *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ‘the reality of God, then, is the creative arrival of this powerful future in the event of love.’⁶⁰¹

While God, existing at the end of history, has broken into the flow of history, ‘only in the future...will the statement “God exists” prove to be definitely true, but then it will be clear that the statement was always true.’⁶⁰² Yet, the future epoch exerts a causal influence upon the present because ‘what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along.... God was present in every past moment as the one who he is in his futurity.’⁶⁰³

The question of God, while unsettled until the end of history, does not mean that there is no present relation with God.⁶⁰⁴ Instead, inexact speech about God, what we may call mythology but which Pannenberg elsewhere describes as analogy, a Scotist term, is presently overcome by the future doxology.⁶⁰⁵ History finds its end in the historical event of the resurrection, but is simultaneously unfinished, meaning that knowledge of the end of history is still incomplete.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁰ TKG, 64, 69.

⁶⁰¹ TKG, 70.

⁶⁰² TKG, 62.

⁶⁰³ TKG, 63.

⁶⁰⁴ Pannenberg, *Human Nature*, 91.

⁶⁰⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Analogie und Doxologie,’ in *Dogma und Denkstrukturen*, ed. Wilfried Joest and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1963), 99, 105-106.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

Pannenberg concludes his titular essay in *Theology and the Kingdom of God* by arguing that the tension between the future God to whom we must relate in love, and the presently existing world, to which God relates without overwhelming its contingency, can only be reconciled through the Trinity. By way of summary he says

The Trinitarian doctrine describes the coming God as the God of love whose future has already arrived and who integrates the past and present world, accepting it to share in his own life forever. The Trinitarian doctrine is, therefore, no mere Christian addition to the philosophical idea of God. Rather, the Trinitarian doctrine is the ultimate expression for the one reality of the coming God whose Kingdom Jesus Proclaimed.⁶⁰⁷

Thus, God's existence as the future, eternal God who nevertheless acts in history is only conceivable by an appeal to the Trinity. The complex relationship, between God as eternal Trinity and God as active in history, will have an extended treatment in the next chapter. However, prior to examining the Trinity and, in particular, the role of the Spirit as the Trinity is related to us presently, we turn now, instead, to Pannenberg's later discussion of eternity, which is closely tied to this idea of the 'end of history' that has occupied the attention of the majority of this chapter.

4 Eternity and Eschaton

Pannenberg begins one of his last published discussions of eternity by grounding the concept of time in the Augustinian sense of 'the distention of the soul, *distentio animi*,' and makes no mention, as in his previously mentioned anthropology, of Heidegger's concept of the soul being stretched.⁶⁰⁸ However, in an early essay, Pannenberg traces Heidegger's entire concept of time, and thus also his anthropology as it occurs in *Being and Time*,

⁶⁰⁷ TKG, 71.

⁶⁰⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God,' *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 39, no. 1 (2000): 9.

back to Augustine, via Dilthey, and eventually to Plotinus and Aristotle.⁶⁰⁹

Pannenberg is arguing against Heidegger's claim that metaphysics has been fundamentally altered to the point of uselessness. Pannenberg makes his counterclaim by arguing that the connection between being and time, which Heidegger himself takes as foundational, is the same fundamental ontological question which confronted the Scholastics and Aristotle, and is therefore necessarily a metaphysical question.⁶¹⁰

The mention of the Scholastics is, of course, related to Pannenberg's earlier work in Duns Scotus' theology and is likewise related to the mention of Aristotle, upon whose metaphysics Dun Scotus had been building in order to develop a suitable definition of contingency. It was Aristotle, who conceived of the future through a 'psychological interpretation of time, a path followed also by Heidegger in developing his own theory of time' that is the understanding of time being primarily *Dasein's* connection to the world in its ready-to-handedness as comprehended through *Vorgriff*.⁶¹¹ Yet the psychological interpretation, at least when speaking of God as eternal in the future, is unsatisfactory. Perhaps the most developed psychological interpretation of time was explored by Augustine, who regarded the past as existing only in the memory of God. Yet, for Augustine, God does not truly exist in the future, but exists outside of time. That is, time was absent for God's eternity, and the divine only experiences time within his own mind.⁶¹²

However, much of Christian theology would dispute the notion that God has no real relation to eternity, if for no other reason than the historical occurrence of the incarnation, or the very idea of the economic Trinity, to be

⁶⁰⁹ MIG, 71, 74-76.

⁶¹⁰ MIG, 69.

⁶¹¹ MIG, 76.

⁶¹² For Augustine, it seems, all experiences of time, past, present and future, exist only psychologically, even for humans. The difference is that God has a greater knowledge of these incidents and so does not, indeed cannot, experience them in the same way. For God, they are solely psychological. See Book XI, ch xxvii (36)-xxviii (37). In modern translation, Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 242-243.

discussed in the next chapter. If God's eternal existence is understood to mean that there is no time for God, that is time is merely a mental trick of the human psyche, then any notion of the historical person Jesus, or a distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity is entirely removed.⁶¹³ Instead, argues Pannenberg, for God the future exists as future, and past as past; not as psychological perceptions of these events, but they 'are present to God in their actuality.'⁶¹⁴ Augustine's assertion of divine timelessness, which he derives in large part from the revelation of the tetragrammaton in the third chapter of Exodus (I am who I am), is based, continues Pannenberg, upon a faulty translation.⁶¹⁵ Rather than a minor point of discrepancy, this casts doubt upon Augustine's entire description of eternity as timeless.

Instead of understanding the tense of the revelation of YHWH as an atemporal declaration of existence, as in the LXX's rendering of the Hebrew as *ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν* (I am the being), the revelation of the divine name should be understood in the terminology of the other verbs in Exodus three: as future tense. Thus, claims Pannenberg, more accurate understanding of the biblical passage 'the God who will be whoever he will be is not a God to whom time does not matter.' The biblical concept of God, rather, is of God who acts in different ways at different times, yet is concerned that his identity be understood as entirely consistent through his commitment to be who he will be.⁶¹⁶ In other words, if God is to make the commitment to be faithful, as he does in the Exodus account, this necessarily implies a temporally bound promise. If there is no time for God, then revelation recorded in the third chapter of Exodus is not a promise, but a statement of fact, and neither the

⁶¹³ Pannenberg, 'Eternity, Time and the Trinity,' 12.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 10. This would likely be the case since Augustine would have read either the early Greek translations or, more likely given his admitted disdain for Greek, the Old Latin translations which were based upon the Greek. In both instances the Hebrew, which can be rendered as either a present or, more likely, a future, is changed to read something closer to 'I am the Being,' an interpretation that lends itself to Augustine's description of timeless eternity and likely has its roots in Greek Platonic thought concerning the divine and perfection.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 11.

language, nor the greater witness of biblical history, would seem to support such an assertion. Instead, continues Pannenberg, ‘the biblical view of God’s everlasting existence is more similar to the Plotinian concept of eternity than to that of Augustine.’⁶¹⁷

For Plotinus, rather than understanding eternity as something entirely opposed to time, time has its source in eternity, and not in any human mind.⁶¹⁸ The Plotinian eternity, also, gives a certain priority to the future, leading Pannenberg to observe that ‘it was not Heidegger but Plotinus who first maintained the primacy of the future in the understanding of time.’⁶¹⁹ Plotinus’ advantage over Augustine is that eternity, for Plotinus, consists of ‘the whole of life in simultaneous presence.’⁶²⁰ For Plotinus, the present experience of time as differentiated events, rather the unified whole of eternity, is a result of some cosmic fall by the human soul.⁶²¹ The perfect unity of eternity then is lost into a fragmentation of life. Here, the language reflects Plato’s description of a descent by the human soul in his *Timaeus*.

Pannenberg’s description of the Plotinian view of eternity seems to focus primarily upon the first definition Plotinus offers of eternity as temporal wholeness. Further, Plotinus seeks to describe eternity (αἰών) in terms of everlasting time (αἰδιότης), declaring that these are simply two ways of discussing the same ultimate perfection from which time ultimately is derived.⁶²² Yet Plotinus’ description of eternity is problematic; his description of the soul faces the same difficulties that would eventually confront Dilthey, that is, how a soul, or human being, can be said to have a completeness.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁶¹⁸ MIG, 76.

⁶¹⁹ MIG, 76-77.

⁶²⁰ Pannenberg, ‘Time, Eternity and the Trinity,’ 10.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Plotinus, *Enneads: A Modern Edition*; Plotinus, *Plotini Opera*, ed. Paul Henry and Hans Rudolf Schwyzer, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), III.7.2-3; 338-340;

Plotinus solves this problem by suggesting that presently existing beings can have a form of completeness by participation with the eternal ‘Mind,’ and this participation is that toward which all creatures are moving.⁶²³ This unity is possible for Plotinus because the ‘soul’ he speaks of is not of an individual, but of the entire *kosmos* (κοσμος). This, however, would lead to such a loss of identity that it is difficult to say how any sense of human autonomy, and thus human freedom is possible. For our purposes, then, Augustine has an advantage over Plotinus on this point by individualising the soul, though, as mentioned, Augustine fails to prioritize the future.⁶²⁴ Despite the failing of Plotinus on this one point, it may be possible to salvage his concept of eternity within a Christian theology. Eternity could be conceivable as possessing all time and events.

In order for us to characterise eternity as the wholeness of creation, it must contain the ‘fullness of life’ possessed ‘simultaneously,’ which is to say that it contains all historic events. Pannenberg labels this concept of eternity ‘omnitemporal.’⁶²⁵ This concept of eternity, explains Pannenberg, allows for a ‘differentiation’ of events that nevertheless takes them as a unity. In doing so, Pannenberg is drawing from both the Plotinian conception of eternity as a unity, and the Augustinian concept of duration for the individual *Dasein*.⁶²⁶

Given Pannenberg’s insistence that God acts with temporality in mind, by presenting the incarnation as an historical event most of all, but also by confronting all past events from the future, it is unsurprising that he would likewise insist that eternity preserve a distinction between the various temporal loci of historical events. By preserving the differentiation in eternity, Pannenberg affirms the experience of time by individuals through history and shows that ‘time is not an illusion in the eyes of the Creator, to whom all

⁶²³ MIG, 76-77. The word is sometimes translated ‘Intellect,’ but is the Greek ‘νοϋς.’

⁶²⁴ MIG, 77-78, 80.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 170-171. I am using the term ‘*Dasein*’ here to avoid too close an identification of human identity with the platonic idea of a dualistic ‘soul’ and also to highlight the connection given in this chapter to Heidegger.

things are present,' as is the case in Augustine.⁶²⁷ However, even more fundamental than this, is Pannenberg's insistence on avoiding determinism and preserving human freedom.

Pannenberg confirms the argument made in chapter one of this thesis when he states that the problem of determinism first occurred to him during the writing of his doctoral dissertation.⁶²⁸ One reason for emphasising the genuine historical nature of God's revelation and action is that both classical and neo-orthodox formulations of the doctrine of God seem to lead to a sort of determinism, a critique which was foundational for Bloch's atheism.⁶²⁹ Thus the reformulation of the doctrine of God as the 'power from the future' has the advantage not only of making a greater sense of Jesus' eschatological message of the Kingdom of God, but also of removing the problem of an omnipotent being existing absolutely at present, since God is 'not yet,' in his fullness.

Yet, if human freedom is to be preserved in its fullest sense, which is that every human person can exert genuine causal force upon the external world, the idea of an authentic temporality to events must be preserved.⁶³⁰ As suggested in the first chapter, contingency, which is requisite for human freedom, can only be conceived in the context of time. If there is no sense of time, then all historical occurrences are necessary or else fail to exist at all, and if something is necessary, it can in no way be construed to have acted freely.

Robert John Russell ably describes the distinctive aspects of Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity understood as omnipresence. Russell uses the terms 'duration' and 'co-presence' to speak of the simultaneous unity and distinction of time and temporal events which occurs at eternity. Time, continues Russell, is not 'point-like' but has a 'temporal thickness.'⁶³¹ The

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 171.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 172.

⁶³¹ Russell, *Time and Eternity*, 13.

result is, argues Russell, that the whole of time is taken up into eternity as ‘distinct’ instants that are somehow not ‘separate’ instants.⁶³² Russell argues that eternity cannot be described in more detail than that, citing Pannenberg’s own appeal to the unity and diversity within the Trinity. In the same way that there are three persons and one substance, so there is a myriad of temporal occurrences relating to each other as past, present and future, but which are all unified in simultaneity without compromising their distinctiveness, yielding a ‘temporal thickness.’⁶³³ Thus, God is not yet present with respect to the fragmented nature of the human experience of history, but is already God from history’s end, and thus throughout all events held in unity. With this understanding of eternity, we turn back to its particular relation to eschatological talk and the ‘end of history.’

Pannenberg readily acknowledges that his concept of history means that the ‘end of history’ is the temporal locus where ‘time and eternity coincide.’ This type of language, coupled with Pannenberg’s earlier argument that God nevertheless acts within history as the God of future, necessitates that time cannot be conceived as spatialized.⁶³⁴ In other words, talk about the temporal aspect of *kosmos* as either ‘block’ or ‘open’ will be unhelpful as will discussion of time along a line. There simply are no visual analogies that can be drawn. Still one cannot deny, in light of Einstein and others, that there is a link between space and time.⁶³⁵ There is a sense in which the future is, nevertheless, ‘open’ in that it is contingent in the same way that other events are contingent. However, the unresolved conclusion to history does not mean, argues Pannenberg, that this future has no causal influence upon the present and past. How exactly this can be the case, though, Pannenberg is unable to say, citing the limitations of language.⁶³⁶

⁶³² Ibid., 14.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Pannenberg, *Historicity of Nature*, 56.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 56-57.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 58-59.

Pannenberg argues that this limitation of religious language will be overcome at the eschaton when, as noted above, God overcomes epistemological concerns as well. Not only does God exist in the future, but knowledge of God is also necessarily future in orientation.⁶³⁷ Still, despite Pannenberg's argument that the concept of a defined end to history that nevertheless leaves the present and future otherwise contingent cannot be comprehensively addressed due to the limitations of language, we will continue to explore this topic, articulating Pannenberg's idea of the 'end of history' in more detail toward the end of chapter six.

What can be said at present, though, is that eschatology is not only important for epistemology in Pannenberg's theology, but for redemption as well. Redemption or salvation is necessarily eschatological, and as such eschatology has an additional prominence in theology.⁶³⁸ For Pannenberg, rather than two separate aspects, epistemology and redemption are linked together in eschatology.

eschatology is not just the subject of a single chapter in dogmatics; it determines the perspective of Christian doctrine as a whole. With the eschatological future God's eternity comes into time and it is thus creatively present to all the temporal things that precede this future. Yet God's future is still the creative origin of all things in the contingency of their existence even as it is also the final horizon of the definitive meaning and therefore of the nature of all things and all events. On the path of their history in time objects and people exist only in anticipation of that which they will be in the light of their final future: the advent of God.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Offenbarung und "Offenbarungen" im Zeugnis der Geschichte,' in *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie*, vol. 1: *Philosophie, Religion, Offenbarung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), 224.

⁶³⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 531. (hereafter ST3)

⁶³⁹ ST3, 531.

The ‘anticipation’ that Pannenberg mentions must be understood as genuine participation in God’s future eternity, and not a mere psychological anticipation.⁶⁴⁰

Up to this point, we have affirmed, with Pannenberg, the claim made in chapter three that there is only one history within which God operates, as opposed to a super-history or redemptive history somehow distinct from human history. While that remains the case, we should affirm that God experiences history in a manner entirely distinct from humanity. This may help to explain, at least partially, the phenomenon of an end to history occurring within the midst of history, around which so much of Pannenberg’s work is based. As has been noted throughout this section, Pannenberg is unable to find a suitable language to describe what he considers the apparent incongruity between the *eschaton*, as both present and future, that encompasses the whole of history, existing as a defined end, without it necessarily infringing upon the contingency of human history. A possible solution may exist, though, if one re-examines the structure of time itself. Russell’s suggestion of a ‘temporal thickness’ to time at the *eschaton* is helpful, to a degree, but Russell offers little in the way of a constructive explanation regarding what this thickness might entail. One avenue that warrants investigation is within multi-dimensional time. The concept, though possibly having traces in Heidegger, Plotinus or even earlier, was first formally described by J.W. Dunne’s *An Experiment with Time*.⁶⁴¹ While much of the work relies upon a particularly puzzling interpretation of idealism and begins with a much criticized discussion of ‘pre-cognitive dreams,’ at least one critique, J. Alexander Gunn, notes the promise of additional metaphysical dimensions of time, if not physical ones.⁶⁴² Yet Gunn’s modification relies heavily upon his limited understanding of the, at the time, very new sciences of quantum mechanics and relativity physics.

⁶⁴⁰ MIG, 97.

⁶⁴¹ London: A. C Black, 1927.

⁶⁴² “The Problem of Time,” *Jounral of Philosophical Studies*, (4:14) (1929), 180-191.

Current work in physics demonstrates that not only is it viable to consider time as at least two dimensional, but that a six dimensional model of the universe (four spatial and two temporal) shows considerable promise in achieving a unified quantum field theory.⁶⁴³ To be clear, it had already been established that equations within modern physics, such as the Standard Model, are likely to hold for at least six temporal dimensions.⁶⁴⁴ Bars explores 4+2 physics in order to give a more robust picture of the physical universe, though as is often the case in these sort of discussions, it is not definitive.

For our purposes, however, this introduces a possible resolution to the tension between an extant ‘end of history’ and an contingent flow to history. It may be helpful to connect this with the spatial analogies used to describe our experience of the physical universe in four rather than three dimensions. Modern Physics refers to the universe as having ‘no edge,’ yet this does not require that the universe be considered to be infinite. To help, an analogy is drawn between two relations: that of two dimensional to three dimensional space, on the one hand, and that of three dimensional to four dimensional space, on the other.

A being that perceives space within two dimensions would, upon the surface of a three dimensional globe, never experience an end or edge to the universe, though it would, in fact, exist finitely for a three dimensional observer. In a similar manner, we might consider that our three dimensional experience of space might be a three-dimensional experience of space that actually extends into four or more dimensions.⁶⁴⁵ This is, in many ways, one conclusion drawn from Edward Abbott’s classic *Flatland: A Romance of*

⁶⁴³ Itzhak Bars, “Survey of Two-Time Physics,” *Classical and Quantum Gravity*, 18 (2001), 3113-3130. The paper is a highly technical description of what Bars, and others, label ‘4+2’ physics. Rather than a single paper, though, this is still the main thrust of Bars’s work today at the University of Southern California (USC)

⁶⁴⁴ J Strnad, “Once More on Multi-dimensional Time,” *Journal of Physics A: Mathematics and General*, 14: 1981, L433-435.

⁶⁴⁵ Most physics work today affirms that it is at least as likely that the universe has four spatial dimensions as it is that universe has three spatial dimensions.

Many Dimensions.⁶⁴⁶ The point for us is that understanding space in multiple dimensions beyond our own can yield surprising conclusions regarding movement within such space.⁶⁴⁷

Specifically, if one moves along an additional temporal dimension beyond our own punctiliar experience of it, one could experience what we might label an ‘edge’ or ‘end’ to the experience of time along one dimension of that time, without it necessarily being the end of time, and even have that experience of time intersect within the flow of that time. This may even help to explain the psychological understanding of time as existing single dimensionally (along a time line), while only experiencing it without dimensions (the experience of ‘now’ only), as though we are grasping for an understanding of time that is dimensionally more complex than our present experience of it.

To be clear, this is not an argument that God experiences time in a different dimension than humans do, but instead that God experiences the same history more completely by experiencing all of past, present and future simultaneously, as the fullness of multi-dimensional time. This more complete experience of time would account for the description of ‘temporal thickness,’ while still allowing that this multidimensional time remain contingent.

This also accords well with Pannenberg’s own statements, though it seems he lacked the language to fully elaborate upon them. For instance, Pannenberg argues that the duration of each moment is fully present to God, but, in what he perceives to be following Barth’s decision to rework the relation between time and eternity in Plotinian/Boethius’s, as opposed to Augustinian, terms that do not see them in opposition, in such a way that the experience of the now is seen as a gift from the fuller experience of time that

⁶⁴⁶ The conclusion, it seems, was entirely unintended on Abbott’s part, and, though his novella was published at the end of the 19th century, was not made until 1920 in William Garnett’s ‘Letter to the Editor’ of *Nature* (12 Feb 1920), as a way to make sense of Einstein’s work.

⁶⁴⁷ A more robust, technical decription of multi-spatial dimensions can be found in Marc Lachièze-Rey and Jean-Paul Luminet “Cosmic Topology” *Physics Reports* 254 (1995): 135-214.

defines God's being.⁶⁴⁸ However, despite his praise of Barth's move to redefine the relation between time and eternity, Pannenberg states that Barth failed to 'explore' what this means.⁶⁴⁹

Rather than seeing our experience of the now as the intersection between past and future, Pannenberg hopes to move beyond the Augustinian vision of time experienced as a 'fleeting vision.' He allows that 'human experience is not real duration,' in line with Augustine, but argues that it is a minor participation in the greater experience of time that is rooted in God, who 'gives' us the present.⁶⁵⁰ For Pannenberg, the experience of the human life is incomplete not only because the end has yet to be experienced, but because we have not fully experience each 'now' or present moment, which can only occur at the future coming of eternity into our temporal experience.⁶⁵¹ The 'fragmentary and restricted' experience of time will then be replaced by the 'eternal today of God.' It is defined, not from a lack of temporality, but in its duration, for, according to Pannenberg 'God's day lasts. The "fleeting Now" of our sense of the present corresponds only remotely to the lasting and abiding Now of his present.'⁶⁵² We have a slight connection to this via the concept of duration.

If there is past, present and future, yet each present has its own duration that does not cross into past or present, as Pannenberg argues, without losing its temporal character, then, we might ask, into what is the 'Now' extended if it is neither into past nor present? Such a concept is impossible if time is understood along a single dimension. However, it may extend, and thus have duration, if time exists infinitely along two distinct dimensions, or at least infinitely in the direction that does not constitute our

⁶⁴⁸ ST1, 406-407; re-emphasizing the Barthian/Boethius/Plotinus connection in ST3, 596, as understanding eternity as the 'fuller expression of life' understood in context to be temporal in meaning.

⁶⁴⁹ ST3, 596-597.

⁶⁵⁰ ST3, 597.

⁶⁵¹ ST3, 597-598.

⁶⁵² ST3, 598, capitalization original.

experience of past, present and future. Thus, while Pannenberg does not explicitly state that time exists as two dimension, given the manner in which Pannenberg speaks about time, and the promising work being done in ‘4+2 dimensional’ physics, noted above, we can extend Pannenberg’s introductory remarks on this matter into this new realm.⁶⁵³ We shall return to this topic again at the end of chapter six along with its implications for understanding human freedom in the context of eternity as defined by Pannenberg.

Conclusion

The inclusion of multidimensional time also makes more concrete the anticipation of God as the future relating to us in our present. This ‘hope,’ of our experience of the future God, must be grounded, continues Pannenberg, in the ‘soil’ of anthropological concerns.⁶⁵⁴ Rather than a separate disjointed concept, anthropology, then, is tied together with epistemology and redemption as fundamentally eschatological. The anthropological concerns, which were themselves historical concerns of Dilthey, Gadamer and Heidegger discussed in the previous chapter and extended into a discussion of Scheler, Gehlen, Herder, and Plessner, all look forward to fulfilment in the future. Bloch’s principle of hope insists that every person must face his or her own future. While for Bloch this future is empty, for Pannenberg we find instead ‘that *God and not nothing is the end of time.*’⁶⁵⁵ Thus, each *Dasein* only exists so far as he or she relates to the coming future as personal power, that is as God. Authentic being of everything is ‘complete’ or ‘fails’ to exist based upon whether or not it participates in the future, which is God.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ See also, Russell, *Time and Eternity*, note 35, where he outlines a private correspondence between him and Philip Clayton (a pupil of Pannenberg and translator of *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*) who argues that, for Pannenberg, ‘duration is actually the deeper and more powerful way to understand *all* temporal process, including physical time.’ (citing personal correspondence with Clayton from 2007) Russell takes this to mean that duration, in the terms Pannenberg outlines it, can best be understood ‘at the “bottom rung” of nature: physics.’

⁶⁵⁴ ST3, 541-542.

⁶⁵⁵ ST3, 595.

⁶⁵⁶ MIG, 87.

Christian theology and revelation can find genuine participation in the future as future now. While it will not be *confirmed* to have been the case until God unifies all of creation, it *is* nevertheless the case, and will be proven to have been the case, that Christianity can have ‘finality in the midst of unfinished *Geschichte*.’⁶⁵⁷ This is possible because the resurrection of Jesus is an eschatological event. The resurrection, then, is the interruption of incomplete history with history’s defined end. In doing so, we may relate to God in his eternal absolute existence, as the God of the future, because his future has confronted us in the resurrection.

Nevertheless, a tension remains between our present existence and still incomplete finality of God’s eternity. If history is truly contingent, we might ask, how can its end be defined yet possess an existence so concrete that we may relate to it? Pannenberg suggests that such a reconciliation may be possible if we look to ‘the role of the field concept’ within physics.⁶⁵⁸ Amazingly, a similar suggestion was present as far back as a 1963 essay. There, Pannenberg argues that God unifies fragmented history, but only does so from the end toward which the *kosmos* is advancing. In this context, he argues that the motion toward this defined end might be understood as the Spirit working via a ‘field’ (*Feld*).⁶⁵⁹ While it is unlikely that Pannenberg had in mind the specific field concept of physics, at least to the extent he did in his later work in the philosophy of science, the early beginning of the concept had already begun to find a place in Pannenberg’s earliest theology. Further, as we have seen, the application of other concepts from contemporary physics, such as multidimensional time, can amplify Pannenberg’s argument. The next two chapters will expand upon the field concept in order to conclude the construction of Pannenberg’s theology of history and apply that theology to the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

⁶⁵⁷ Pannenberg, ‘Offenbarung also Kategorie,’ 245. Exact quote: ‘Endgültigkeit inmitten der noch nicht abgeschlossenen Geschichte.’

⁶⁵⁸ BQT3, 108.

⁶⁵⁹ Pannenberg, ‘Die Offenbarung Gottes,’ 168-169.

CHAPTER 5: DYNAMIC FIELD IN HISTORY AND THE ACTION OF SPIRIT

The last chapter not only helped define the key parameters of Pannenberg's theology of history, but also highlighted one of the central problems of this thesis. If the 'end of history' is so defined that it has been witnessed proleptically in the resurrection, and if God acts from that end, then it is difficult to see how the contingency defined in the first chapter, that is so critical for the concept of human freedom, is not eradicated. In order to address this issue over the next two chapters, we must look at the causal mechanism of God's action within creation. In other words, if we are to articulate how both divine sovereignty and human freedom, in terms of contingency, can coexist, we must describe the manner in which God acts from the end of history in such a way that these actions do not overwhelm the actions of creation, without also negating the sovereignty of God. In order to do so, we will examine the manner in which Pannenberg describes God's actions in creation: through the application of field theory.

This chapter is primarily concerned with two related objectives as it pertains to field theory. First, we need to understand what field theory is, along with its philosophical background, so that we may ascertain in what manner Pannenberg utilises the concept within his own theology. Second, I will elucidate what this application to the Spirit means for our theological understanding of God in eternity and how understanding the Spirit as field relates to God acting in history. The understanding of the Spirit as field has profound implications for the doctrine of the Trinity as God acts in history and

the relation of God acting in history to his eternal self. This will be examined toward the end of the chapter. The next chapter will extend this discussion to more directly address the action of God as it relates to history and our question of human freedom and divine sovereignty.

1. Defining the Concept of Field Theory

1.1 Definition and Background to Field Theory

Field theory, broadly understood, is a branch of physics that is concerned with causal action-at-a-distance⁶⁶⁰ on a cosmic scale. In its post-Newtonian use, field theory posits this action-at-a-distance as occurring between material objects via a non-material field. For Michael Faraday, this non-material field was force itself, and, for Albert Einstein, it was space-time, understood in terms of metric field. This modern understanding of field theory, with its description of non-materially influenced causation, opens the door for a theological dialogue with science, since God is understood non-materially. It will be beneficial to examine the background for field theory before proceeding to the various theological implications that arise from it in the following section.

Pannenberg introduced the concept of field as his primary descriptive model for divine causal action at roughly the midpoint of his career.⁶⁶¹ This stands in contrast to the more commonly employed theological appeal to quantum theory as the primary means of describing causal action in the universe.⁶⁶² The distinction between quantum theory and field theory might be

⁶⁶⁰ The term 'action-at-a-distance' is used frequently throughout various treatments of field theory and quantum theory to describe an interaction between two material objects over a gap of space that cannot be traced to occurring through some intervening physical medium. Usually this is observed by 'simultaneous' action, though this qualifier is not necessary. See the introduction to William Berkson, *Fields of Force: The Development of a World View From Faraday to Einstein* (New York: Halsted Press, 1974), esp. pp. 2-4

⁶⁶¹ *TTN*, 37-38.

⁶⁶² See, for instance, John Polkinghorne, *The Quantum World* (London: Longman, 1984); and T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); However, it should be noted that, while Torrance spends more time in his theological dialogue with quantum physics, he does not dismiss a relation of theology to field theory as Polkinghorne does.

characterised as a difference between emphasising microcosmic causation on an atomic/sub-atomic level and emphasising macrocosmic causation in light of the whole of space-time. The reasons for Pannenberg's macrocosmic outlook will become clear below.

Pannenberg first examines field theory through its historical development. In contrast to the once-dominant scientific paradigm offered by Rene Descartes, which related causal force exclusively to material forces, Isaac Newton proposed, through his analysis of gravitational force, that immaterial forces could also act upon objects.⁶⁶³ In particular, the concept of a non-material force can be seen in Newton's *Principia*, first appearing in definitions 5 and 7 which describe the effects of gravitational force, a non-material force, between two material objects over some distance.⁶⁶⁴ Still, while Newton's calculation and description of gravitational force spoke of gravity as immaterial, gravitational force was understood as exerting an influence through material substance, which he identified as aether.⁶⁶⁵ While Newton did not completely commit to the concept of 'action-at-a-distance,' the defining characteristic of field theory, his work suggested that such a thing was not only conceivable, but altogether likely on the basis of the mathematics alone. According to Pannenberg, the idea of a causal force not linked to any spatial (material) body was first proposed in earnest by Michael Faraday through the concept of 'field.'⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶³ ST2, 79; I. Bernard Cohen, 'A Guide to Newton's *Principia*,' in Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 43-49; Cohen argues that Newton was intentionally working against Cartesian theory wishing his own scientific work to take the place of Descartes' hypotheses.

⁶⁶⁴ Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 405, 407. [def. 5; 7]

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 809 [book 3, prop. 6, corollary 2]. Cohen in his 'Guide' in the same volume argues that Newton initially did not account for an aether, but could not make the philosophical leap to account for a completely non-material force that his math suggested, 55-56; of course, the concept of 'aether' is no longer in use in contemporary Newtonian-based models of physics.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 80-81; Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science,' in *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance*, ed. Ted Peters (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 163-164.

Pannenberg draws his understanding of field theory and its history in large part from the writings of William Berkson and Max Jammer, who argue that while the first definitive expression of field theory is found in Faraday, the philosophical underpinnings of his theory can be found earlier, particularly in Newton.⁶⁶⁷ According to Berkson, the defining characteristic of any field theory is that it requires a non-material ‘intervening medium’ to transfer energy from one body to another. Although for some of the precursors to field theory it ‘was felt to be a quasi-liquid or solid obeying Newton’s laws, called the *ether*,’ Faraday was unique being the first to describe this field as ‘*force itself*.’⁶⁶⁸

Faraday did so by linking force ‘to the totality of the field that embraces one or more bodies.’ In Faraday’s view, ‘mass...depends on the concentration of force at a given point.’⁶⁶⁹ This move is important, for it suggests that, rather than being a property inherent to material objects, mass is dependent upon a non-material force. Following this line of thought, forces are not reducible to the motion of physical bodies, rather the physical bodies are actually manifestations of force fields.⁶⁷⁰ Thus, according to Faraday, the entire universe constitutes a single field of force, or force field, and all material objects are manifestations of that field. As Max Jammer argues, from the perspective of a philosophical history of science, energy has begun to be seen as more fundamental for understanding matter, while mass, previously the standard property for defining matter, has become less foundational for describing matter.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁷ Pannenberg openly admits his view is heavily influenced by Berkson and Jammer in MIG, 108. A brief examination of his footnotes in his *Systematic Theology, Towards a Theology of Nature*, and most other works, in his discussion of field theory will confirm heavy reliance upon both Berkson and Jammer.

⁶⁶⁸ Berkson, *Fields of Force*, 2-3.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁷⁰ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 85.

⁶⁷¹ Max Jammer, *Concepts of Mass in Classical and Modern Physics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1961), 215-221.

In addition to Faraday, Jammer, and Berkson, Pannenberg also draws on the work of Albert Einstein, whose general theory of relativity might be considered the peak of field theory.⁶⁷² Einstein formulated his field theory in terms of Riemannian geometry, which uses the terminology of a ‘metric field’ or vector field. Non-Euclidean geometry, like Riemannian geometry, was created when it was discovered that certain axioms, postulates, theorems, and other aspects of Euclidean geometry could be dispensed with while still yielding a consistent mathematical system. Since Euclidean geometry is understood merely to approximate the natural world, rather than to have a direct correspondence to it, relying as it does on abstract postulates divorced from physical observation, it was argued that a new, empirically based system might be more useful. Rather than being purely axiomatic or analytic, most non-Euclidean geometry has a ‘significant empirical basis.’⁶⁷³

It is in this context that Einstein speaks of space or space-time as itself a metric field.⁶⁷⁴ Using this, Einstein is therefore suggesting that not only is force and motion variable, as understood in traditional physics, but space-time itself is also variable according to the perspective measurement of the metric field of space.⁶⁷⁵ Einstein suggests that space-time, understood as a single measurable continuum, rather than two discrete continuums (space and time), is variable along *each* of its four axes (length, height, depth, and time), while certain vectors within the continuum, particularly the speed of light, must be

⁶⁷² Berkson, *Fields of Force*, 3.

⁶⁷³ Hans Reichenbach, ‘Non-Euclidean Spaces,’ in *Problems of Space and Time: From Augustine to Albert Einstein on the Fundamentals for Understanding our Universe*, ed. J.J.C. Smart (London: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1964), 215-220.

⁶⁷⁴ The metric field describes a range of potentially valid values in relation to a given distance, given that distance, in Riemannian geometry, is understood to be somewhat variable.

⁶⁷⁵ Albert Einstein, ‘Die Feldgleichungen der Gravitation,’ *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Nov 25, 1915): 25, pp. 844-847, available online at <http://nausikaa2.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/cgi-bin/toc/toc.x.cgi?dir=6E3MAXK4&step=thumb> [Accessed 25/05/2010]. From this point forward, unless preceded by ‘metric’ when using the term ‘field,’ it will be assumed to have its scientific sense and not its mathematical sense.

taken as a constant vector value.⁶⁷⁶ By accepting Einstein's argument that space-time itself is contingent in terms of metric field because it is variable, the entirety of the universe, which is indistinguishable from space-time, is understood as contingent.⁶⁷⁷ One finds a parallel in the argument of Scotus, particularly as it finds application in Pannenberg, for Scotus demonstrated that either the totality of the universe is contingent, or none of its constituent parts are contingent, due to the transitive property of contingent causation. It is important to note that not only is causation contingent, as explicitly argued in chapters one and two of this thesis, but, as Einstein suggested, space-time itself is likewise understood in terms of a contingent metric field. This will prove particularly important toward the end of the thesis.

Despite understanding causation and all of space-time as contingent, relativity physics also suggests, as a field theory, that there is some *ontos*, whether force or matter or something else entirely, that is the fundamental basis of the universe and capable of becoming manifest in all of the forms that constitute the material universe.⁶⁷⁸ In relativity physics, this means that all aspects of the universe are relative to each other on a cosmic scale such that energy and mass are directly proportionate, as famously stated by Einstein.⁶⁷⁹ Pannenberg summarises Einstein's work in this way:

A. Einstein in his general theory of relativity (1916) could even try to reduce the concept of force to the metric field of a non-Euclidian space-time. Conversely, the metric field of space-time might

⁶⁷⁶ It is in this instance that Einstein speaks of the theory of relativity arguing that time can be in flux, a radical idea at the time, now largely accepted.

⁶⁷⁷ The same holds true for Faraday's more radical claim concerning the adaptive nature of causal field, most well-known through his connection of magnetic and electric force; see Michael Faraday, *On the Various Forces of Nature* (New York: Thomas Y. Cowell Company, 1961).

⁶⁷⁸ See the discussion below on the Stoics. This idea is put forth by Max Jammer, who suggests that field theory is built upon certain ontological commitments of the Stoics; Max Jammer, 'Feld-Feldtheorie,' in J. Ritter, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 2 (Basel: Schwabe, 1972), 926-927.

⁶⁷⁹ $E=mc^2$

itself be reduced to the concept of force.
At any rate, field theories see a close link
between force and space-time.⁶⁸⁰

Pannenberg is too cautious here, for field theory sees not only a 'close link' but direct equivalence between space-time, matter and energy. Einstein's argument that energy and mass are directly proportionate suggests that mass can be 'created' from energy, understood mathematically as a force vector, and energy is 'created' from matter.⁶⁸¹ It is from this that Pannenberg will see potential for speaking of the Spirit in terms of field.

Pannenberg's overt focus on field theory, instead of quantum theory, is revealing of his underlying focus. Dynamic field theories give priority of the whole over the parts; this priority is also present in Pannenberg's theological thought.⁶⁸² While individual aspects of the cosmos and particular events are important, this importance is secondary to their contribution to the entire cosmos and its history.⁶⁸³ It is clear, then, why both Faraday's and Einstein's description of field as encompassing the whole of reality, would seem so appealing to Pannenberg.⁶⁸⁴ If God is Lord over all of history and creation, then it is appropriate to understand God's activity in and for the world in light of the totality of cosmic existence. Field theory may be generally understood as a branch of physics that seeks to explain causal relation between objects over a metric distance through the concept of a mass-less field. Since field theory is a macro-theory, which describes the field as immaterial, Pannenberg suggests it may be of significant value for theological discussion.

⁶⁸⁰ ST2, 81.

⁶⁸¹ Einstein's special theory of relativity means that mass and energy are interchangeable, which necessitates that one could be 'translated' into the other. More recently, the reverse has been demonstrated experimentally, where, at least as early as 1997, experimenters were able to focus photons (energy particles) in such a way to produce objects with mass (positrons). See Douglas Burke et al., 'Positron Production in Multiphoton Light-by-Light Scattering,' *Physical Review Letters* 79, no. 9 (September 1997): 1626-1629.

⁶⁸² Ted Peters, 'Introduction' in *TTN*, 13.

⁶⁸³ See *TKG*, 52-55.

⁶⁸⁴ Berkson, *Fields of Force*, 317ff; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 88.

A competing theory in physics is quantum theory or quantum mechanics. At the subatomic level, the mathematics of quantum theory provides more accurate predictions of causal events while discussions of the workings of the universe on a more cosmic level, such as with black holes and galaxies, field theory, particularly Einstein's, is a more accurate predictor of the causal events. In light of this, contemporary physics tends generally to affirm the validity of both quantum theory and field theory with some work toward combining the two into 'quantum field theory.'⁶⁸⁵

In particular, the 'Standard Model' of the universe, one of the most widely accepted and utilised equations of physics, both derives from quantum field theory and has its limitations revealed by quantum field theory.⁶⁸⁶ Specifically, the Standard Model disregards the pull of gravitational field among certain types of subatomic particles and must account for this if there is to be a grand 'theory of everything.'⁶⁸⁷ While contenders for alternatives to the standard model exist, most notably string theory (except some forms such as 11dM-Theory or F-theory), and loop quantum gravity that minimise, but do not eliminate, the impact of both classical field theory and relativity theory, most physicists work within some form of a 'unified field theory,' which attempts to either quantize fields, as in quantum field theories, or demonstrate a reaction between subatomic quanta and non-material fields.⁶⁸⁸ This is not to

⁶⁸⁵ This is now quite commonly acknowledged in physics, but see especially Biplin Desai, *Quantum Mechanics with Basic Field Theory* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. pp.32-78; Heinrich Saller, *Operational Spacetime* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 111-145; T. Padmanabhan, *Gravitation: Foundations and Frontiers* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 591-642; Yoriaki Nagashima, *Elementary Particle Physics*, vol. 1, *Quantum Field Theory and Particles* (Weinheim: Wiley-VCH, 2010), esp. ch. 7; and Alexander Altland, *Condensed Matter Field Theory* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 360-368. All of these works are built upon the foundation of affirming both field theory and quantum mechanics. In other words, it is part of the system within which they operate.

⁶⁸⁶ Gerard 't Hooft, 'The Conceptual Basis of Field Theory,' *Philosophy of Physics* vol. A, ed. Jeremy Butterfield and John Earman in *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science* ed. by Dov M. Gabbay, Paul Thagard, John Woods (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), 661-662

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸ John H. Schwarz, 'Status of Superstring and M-Theory,' *International Journal of Modern Physics A* 25 (2010): 4703-4725, available online <http://arxiv.org/abs/0812.1372v2> [accessed 25 April 2015]; Hubert F.M. Goenner, 'On the History of Unified Field Theories,' *Living Rev.*

say that this chapter will be pursuing field theory on its scientific/mathematical terms, but to acknowledge that, contrary to one of Polkinghorne's assertion against Pannenberg, field theory in both its classical and relativistic formulations, is still an active subject of study and research in contemporary physics.⁶⁸⁹

1.2 The Theological Implications of Non-Material Force

In his adoption of a basic theological orientation focused on God's activity in the whole of creation and history, Pannenberg proposes that field theory may give insight into the manner in which God might be understood to exert a causal influence in the universe. A major benefit of field theory, for Pannenberg, is that it allows for the possibility of an intelligent dialogue between theology and science generally, and concerning God's activity within the physical world specifically.⁶⁹⁰ If a material entity can be subject to a force exerted non-materially, as in field theory, then it becomes intelligible to speak of God, as non-material Spirit, exerting causal force upon material objects.

Pannenberg acknowledges that shortly after Newton's discovery of gravitational force, the immaterial nature of gravity was criticised in the world of physics, particularly by Ernst Mach and Heinrich Hertz who 'sought to reduce forces to bodies or masses.' As Pannenberg notes, if non-material causes are excluded, the idea of God's active presence in the real world would be 'totally nonsensical' given that God is non-material.⁶⁹¹ The exclusion of theological language from the analysis of natural phenomenon was well established in the sciences up to the time of Faraday, who renewed the concept of a non-material force.⁶⁹² Faraday's concept of field theory, therefore, made

Relativity 7 (2004), available online via <http://www.livingreviews.org/lrr-2004-2> [accessed 30 April 2015].

⁶⁸⁹ John Polkinghorne, 'Wolfhart Pannenberg's Engagement with the Natural Sciences,' *Zygon* 34, no. 1 (March 1999): 151-158.

⁶⁹⁰ *TTN*, 38-39.

⁶⁹¹ ST2, 80.

⁶⁹² *TTN*, 38.

dialogue about the causal activity of God within the material universe intelligible again by opening up the possibility of a non-material cause upon material objects.

The concept of a non-material force, as described in field theory, is important because it means that ‘action-at-a-distance’ is possible while allowing the causal force acting upon a material body to lack mass itself.⁶⁹³ If applied theologically, this allows Pannenberg to speak of God’s ‘effective presence’ as being with us and within the material world, such that we might speak of both God’s continuous creation and God’s intervention in the flow of cosmic history. Thus, ‘the field concept could be celebrated as the inauguration of a spiritual interpretation of nature.’⁶⁹⁴ Before examining the fuller implications of using field theory in relation to theology, it will be important to explore the manner in which such a dialogue might occur.

1.3 The Relation of Science and Theology

As the previous section implied, the introduction of field theory, especially in the form hypothesized by Faraday, could open the door for dialogue between science and theology. It need not be disputed that there are certain fundamental differences between science and theology that make any relationship between the two somewhat difficult. In scientific enquiry, natural phenomena are observed and naturalistic explanations are offered. Such an enquiry does not take God into consideration, nor indeed should it, because God is not empirically observable and naturalistic explanations by definition exclude God.

While scientific enquiry requires that the universe be understood as uniform, and while numerous theologians concur with this sentiment, theology is not necessarily bound, in the same way scientific enquiry is, to the

⁶⁹³ Peters, ‘Introduction,’ *TTN*, 13; ‘action-at-a-distance’ is the phrase that Pannenberg uses, borrowed from Berkson, to describe the causal link between two bodies over a gap or distance (metric field) of space. See Berkson, *Fields of Force*, 5-65.

⁶⁹⁴ *TTN*, 40.

assumption that the universe be understood as entirely uniform. By contrast, all scientific approaches assume uniformity of the cosmos, given the value placed upon symmetry and universal application of formulas and laws in science. Uniformity is a necessary presupposition for natural law, or at least for natural law to be helpful to any scientific investigation.⁶⁹⁵ If the universe does not behave uniformly, then scientific enquiry cannot produce useful predictions nor give a reliable description of cosmic events, particularly those that are not directly observed.

Rather than a feature inherent in the universe, for Pannenberg the uniformity of the universe is only possible as a result of God's act of continuous creation, discussed in chapter one. Two things, in particular, Pannenberg argues, should prevent the theologian from accepting an inherently uniform universe. The first is the belief in miracle. Miracles, by their very nature, are incidents where the perceived uniformity of the universe is radically interrupted. The second reason is the Christ event.⁶⁹⁶ For Pannenberg, this is the most unique event in all of history. That is, if there are miracles, and if God became incarnate in the person of Christ and died on a cross, being raised from the dead, as a one-time historical event, then the universe cannot be considered entirely uniform as it is in contemporary scientific investigation. Rather than a problem for theology, though, the unusual and non-uniform nature of the resurrection is what allows one to perceive the activity of God.

A dialogue between science and theology is further complicated with regards to temporal foci. As discussed in the previous chapter, a Christian anthropology suggests that humanity is oriented toward the future.' In contrast, science is concerned first with the past for the purpose of understanding the present and only then, after past and present are taken into account, is the future addressed. For Pannenberg, the already-defined future is

⁶⁹⁵ TTN, 40.

⁶⁹⁶ TTN, 40-41.

so powerful that it exerts a causal influence upon the present.⁶⁹⁷ In light of these and other differences, the theological use of field theory will understand field theory in a different way than in its purely scientific presentation.⁶⁹⁸

Because of this, Pannenberg claims, ‘we cannot have a direct theological interpretation of the field theories of physics.’⁶⁹⁹ More exactly, scientific theories, such as field theory, cannot be engaged by theology in their ‘scientific presentations’ but must instead be engaged through their ‘philosophical presentations.’ A philosophical presentation of a scientific theory is less concerned with the exact experimental methodologies and mathematical proofs of a theory than with its epistemological presuppositions and philosophical/metaphysical implications. Since we are approaching field theory on terms other than its own, reasons Pannenberg, we must have good reason to suggest such a transition in dialogue.⁷⁰⁰

Pannenberg states that his primary reason for entering into dialogue with field theory is his interpretation of the biblical understanding that God is Spirit.⁷⁰¹ He claims that field theory, alone among the modern scientific theories, ‘does justice to the history and concept of spirit.’⁷⁰² Specifically, Pannenberg wants to demonstrate that a common metaphysical background exists between field theory’s description of a field as encompassing or permeating all of reality and theological discussion of the dynamic presence of the Spirit in the entire cosmos, via the term ‘*pneuma*.’ The theological use of ‘Spirit’ and the philosophical underpinnings of field theory’s use of ‘force’

⁶⁹⁷ *TTN*, 41-44.

⁶⁹⁸ Pannenberg, ‘Doctrine of Creation,’ 166.

⁶⁹⁹ *ST2*, 83.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰¹ *ST2*, 83.

⁷⁰² *ST2*, 82.

have enough in common to grant us ‘strong material reasons’ for engaging in dialogue between science and theology.⁷⁰³

On the one hand, the concept of field theory is promising ‘because it seems to offer a modern language that possibly can express the biblical idea of the divine Spirit as the power of life that transcends the living organism and at the same time is intimately present in the individual.’ Yet, caution is needed because no philosophical implication of field theory can be extended far enough to yield a complete picture of God’s kingdom or the ‘Christian hope for new life of a resurrection of the dead.’⁷⁰⁴ Thus, as Grenz argues, although field theory is helpful and suggestive for theology, ‘Pannenberg does not simply equate the concept of the cosmic field with the divine Spirit, but looks to the interesting coalescence of the language of the two disciplines as arising out of their common background.’⁷⁰⁵ This also means, because of the fundamental differences between scientific and theological enquiries, the integration of one into the other will be necessarily uneven.

Another reason that a dialogue with between science and theology seems promising via field theory is due to field theory’s unique description of energy as ‘autonomous’ and not as an attribute of material bodies only.⁷⁰⁶ In particular, ‘Einstein’s field theory comprises space, time, and energy in such a way as to make thinking about the whole of time intelligible.’⁷⁰⁷ That, along with field theory’s philosophical foundation that allows for intelligible discussion of the ‘spiritual presence of God in natural phenomena,’ make the link between it and theology even more promising.⁷⁰⁸ Since scientific theories are best engaged by theology on philosophical grounds, and field theory’s

⁷⁰³ ST2, 82-83.

⁷⁰⁴ *TTN*, 24.

⁷⁰⁵ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 88.

⁷⁰⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, trans. John Maxwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 29-30.

⁷⁰⁷ *TTN*, 48.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

philosophical foundations seem to allow for intelligent theological dialogue, it will be advantageous to explore field theory's philosophical roots further.

1.4 Philosophical Roots of Field Theory: *Pneuma* vs. *Nous*

As mentioned above, Pannenberg claims that a commonality exists between a Christian conception of God and the philosophical background of field theory, specifically through the Christian concept of 'Spirit.' Pannenberg bases this claim upon an article by Max Jammer that makes significant use of Berkson, and makes a strong case for locating the metaphysical foundation for Faraday's field theory in the Stoic concept of *pneuma*.⁷⁰⁹ Though not directly cited by Pannenberg, Jammer's argument is itself built upon the seminal work in the history of science by Samuel Sambursky.⁷¹⁰ Sambursky makes the case that *pneuma* of the Stoics functioned in the exact manner as Faraday's force field.⁷¹¹ This is predicated upon the fact that the concept of Spirit as *pneuma* is understood differently from the concept of Spirit as *nous*.

Pannenberg notes that within ancient Greek philosophy there are two interpretations of the *arche*, or unifying element of the universe, which echo the two senses of 'spirit' that theology has employed, that is *pneuma* or *nous*. Pannenberg dates the understanding of spirit as *pneuma* significantly earlier than that of *nous*. *Pneuma*'s use dates back to the pre-Socratic philosophers, most notably Anaximenes, and finds its mature expression in the Stoics, while, platonic and neo-platonic philosophers advocated for the concept of spirit as *nous*.⁷¹² The primary distinction between *pneuma* and *nous* is that while

⁷⁰⁹ Jammer, 'Feld-Feldtheorie,' 923-927; Pannenberg admits that this is one of the chief reasons for his adoption of this approach in ST2, 81.

⁷¹⁰ Sambursky was a physicist and historian who did pioneering work in the history of science. It should also be noted that Pannenberg frequently highlights the Stoic connection to field theory, locating it entirely with Jammer. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Faith in God the Creator and Scientific Cosmology,' *Communio: International Catholic Review* 28 (2001): 461.

⁷¹¹ See Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1959), 32-35.

⁷¹² ST2, 80-81; Pannenberg, 'Doctrine of Creation,' 164-165; *TTN*, 39; Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Spirit and Mind,' *Mind in Nature*, ed. Richard Elvee (New York: Nobel Conference, XVII, 1982) 140ff.

pneuma implies a personal sort of spirit,⁷¹³ the idea of spirit as *nous* suggests an impersonal order or logic acting as the governing force of the world.⁷¹⁴ Further, the *pneuma* of Stoicism is a state of material flux that interpenetrates, and on many Stoic accounts, is what makes up the entire universe, while nevertheless having a causal action very close to the modern concept of ‘field.’⁷¹⁵

Although a lengthy exposition on physics from the Stoics is not extant, enough fragments of their writings exist to be able to comprise what approximates their understanding of the physical world.⁷¹⁶ For the Stoics, three branches of ancient philosophy, physics, logic and ethics, were all tied together.⁷¹⁷ At the basic level, Stoic physics sought to ‘overcome the dualism between mind and matter taught by other Greek philosophical schools.’ One way in which they did so was to identify mind with matter and both mind and matter with God.⁷¹⁸

Given that the Stoics held that the entirety of the universe is held together by a single unifying material force, which they understood to be God, it will also be helpful to examine the specific terminology they applied to this unifying material force: *logos* is the term employed for it when they wanted to emphasise the rationality of the universe; *tonos* was used to speak of the tension that holds the universe together, as explained below; and *pneuma* was used when discussing the active creative force, or ‘fiery breath of life.’⁷¹⁹ For

⁷¹³ Pannenberg uses spirit interchangeably with *aer* and *arche*, at least in discussing the use of spirit among the Greek philosophers (*TTN*, 38-40).

⁷¹⁴ *TTN*, 38-40.

⁷¹⁵ Sambursky, *Physics*, 22-23.

⁷¹⁶ Michael White, ‘Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology),’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 124.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 1: *Stoicism in Classical and Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 23.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

the Stoics, all three terms were understood to be the same unifying material force that shared the properties described by these terms. The term with which we are most concerned, in this study, is that of *pneuma*.

While it is unclear how much of the concept of *pneuma* was influenced by Heraclitus and his idea of flux, it nevertheless remains that the universe, understood in terms of *pneuma* was dynamic rather than static for the Stoics.⁷²⁰ This active *pneuma* was both the whole of the universe, and manifest within ‘each individual thing in the universe.’⁷²¹ Therefore, one can say that the Stoic God, understood as *pneuma*, is actively present to and within every object of the universe.

According to Sambursky, this permeating, dynamic, *pneuma* interacts with living creatures via the ‘*hegemonikon*’ of a soul, which was itself a manifestation of *pneuma* as an independent, yet dependent, object.⁷²² According to Stoic philosophy of the mind, the soul is divided into multiple parts with the *hegemonikon* being the controlling element that is itself a manifestation of the *pneuma* and through which all other parts of the soul arose.⁷²³

Through the ‘*hegemonikon*,’ continues Sambursky, the Stoics believed that a tension between the independent existence of a soul and the dependence of that soul upon the omni-permeating *pneuma* allowed the sensory experience of causal activity via a ‘tensional motion (*tonike kinesis*).’ Eventually, the Stoics came to understand all causal action to occur as a result of the ‘tension of the *pneuma*’ or ‘*pneumatikos tonos*.’⁷²⁴ Specifically, the Stoics claimed that the presence of the *pneuma* in every aspect of the universe caused a tension between three different aspects that grew out of this *pneuma*. First, the *hexis* or

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁷²¹ Ibid., 27.

⁷²² Sambursky, *Physics*, 24-25.

⁷²³ Colish, *The Stoic Tradition*, 29, 43-45.

⁷²⁴ Sambursky, *Physics*, 28-30.

cohesion of the universe holds all things together as a single unity.⁷²⁵ Second, everything in the universe exhibits a *phusis*, normally translated nature, that allows for things to exist or be ‘alive’ as independent objects.⁷²⁶

The third form of the *pneuma* is the *psuchē*, frequently translated as soul or consciousness, but perhaps best understood, among the Stoics, as will or volition. This third form is the exclusive domain of animals, who exhibit motion under their own power, and humans.⁷²⁷ It is here that the tension is most notable.⁷²⁸ The activity of the *pneuma* exists in tension, *tonos*, with the possibility of things that exist outside of *pneuma*, most notably human will. This tension within the *pneuma* constitutes the *pneumatikos tonos* that actually produces the material world as something actualised rather than possible, in a way that is reminiscent of the independent-dependent tension between Creator and created described in the first two chapters. To further understand the context of this ‘*pneumatic* tension’ as it existed in early Stoic philosophy, it will be helpful to note the modest critique of Sambursky’s description of Stoicism made by John Sellars. Sellars, who admits that Sambursky’s reading is not uncommon, nevertheless suggests that Sambursky creates a picture that reads modern physics and field theory a little bit too much back into the Stoics.⁷²⁹

While there is certainly some consonance between the two, Sellars points to the hard distinction between the philosophical/religious and the scientific that pervades cultures that trace their origin to the Enlightenment and post-enlightenment ‘Western world,’ arguing that no such tension exists

⁷²⁵ John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 91.

⁷²⁶ The term ‘alive’ here is loosely applied, and while the Stoics usually referred to *phusis* as being a property of plants, for the most part, it was used, particularly by Chrysippus, as recounted by the later Stoic Diogenes Laertius, to refer to all things that have a material existence. See Michael Lapidge, ‘Stoic Cosmology’ in *The Stoics*, ed. John Rist (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 175.

⁷²⁷ Sellars, *Stoicism*, 91.

⁷²⁸ There is a tension with each description of the *pneuma*, but each form exhibits as escalating level of tension.

⁷²⁹ Sellars, *Stoicism*, 91.

within many ‘Eastern’ cultures, nor among pre-Enlightenment Europeans. For the Stoics, continues Sellars, it is a mistake to consider *pneuma* as more or less equivalent to Nature, an impersonal force, which Sambursky eventually does.⁷³⁰ Rather, the Stoic *pneuma* is active and has volition which it exercises. It is this conflict of wills, even within the *pneuma*, that is it is the cause of creation, as the conflict moves from potential to actual when the created is distinguished as outside the creator-*pneuma*.⁷³¹ We might take the work of Sellars and Sambursky here and connect to Pannenberg’s concept of continuous creation examined at the start of this thesis. While it must be admitted that the Stoic concept of *pneuma* is not entirely analogous to the way that the early church used the term, the parallels between the two uses, and its connection to field theory, give us strong reasons to investigate whether field theory, understood via this connection, can be successfully applied to Christian theology, in particular to address the problem of divine causation.

The idea of God as Spirit who permeates all things is a fundamental premise in Christian theology. Pannenberg argues that the Church Fathers were faced with a choice in early dialogues concerning the nature of God as Spirit. The strong material element of the Stoic’s presentation of *pneuma*, which, in its materiality, was similar to the early atomists understanding of the universe, led to its rejection by the Church Fathers in favour of the immaterial platonic understanding of Spirit as *nous*, evidenced, for instance, by the firm establishment of the doctrine of the impassibility of God.⁷³²

Pannenberg rejects the notion of the divine spirit as *nous*, considering it an improper picture of God’s true nature since the concept of God as an impersonal *nous* seems to contradict the personal and relational picture of God as *pneuma* presented in the bible.⁷³³ Pannenberg argues that the Old Testament concept of Spirit, or *ruach*, denoting a moving, active, and present wind,

⁷³⁰ Sambursky, *Physics*, 62-67 and following.

⁷³¹ Sellars, *Stoics*, 92-94.

⁷³² ST2, 81-82; Pannenberg, ‘Doctrine of Creation,’ 164-165; Grenz, *Reason for Hope* 60-61.

⁷³³ Pannenberg, ‘Spirit and Mind,’ 140; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 60-62; *TKG*, 58-60.

corresponds more closely with *pneuma* in Stoicism than the impersonal *nous*.⁷³⁴ Thus, Pannenberg argues that ways in which Faraday adapts *pneuma* to his field theory make the Stoic *pneuma* more amenable to the Old Testament use of *ruach*, and thus to Christian doctrine as a whole, than the concept of *nous* can be.

As Pannenberg puts it, ‘For the Stoics the *pneuma* was a very fine stuff that permeates all things, that holds all things in the cosmos together by its tension (*tonos*), and that gives rise to the different qualities and movement of things.’⁷³⁵ Similarly, in contrast to the scientific descriptions of causal action, movement, and matter prior to his writing, Michael Faraday

regarded bodies themselves as forms of forces that for their part are no longer qualities of bodies but independent realities that are “givens” for bodily phenomena. He now viewed these forces as fields that occupy space in order to avoid the problems involved in the idea of force working at a distance, and he hoped that ultimately all these fields would be reducible to a single all-embracing field of force.⁷³⁶

The points of correspondence between the Stoic idea of *pneuma* and Faraday’s field of force are clear. Both view causal ‘action-at-a-distance’ as having its basis in something other than the observable bodies involved. This unobserved cause, whether *pneuma* or force field, is something that permeates the entire cosmos, impacting every activity, what the ancient Greeks called *arche*.⁷³⁷ While the suggested link between Stoicism and field theory is ampliative for theological discussion of Spirit, before this concept can be responsibly engaged, the problem of *pneuma* being understood as matter according to the Stoics must be addressed.

⁷³⁴ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 88-99.

⁷³⁵ ST2, 81.

⁷³⁶ ST2, 80.

⁷³⁷ ST2, 81.

While Pannenberg is willing to accept that the Stoic *pneuma* was understood to be material substance, and so would need to be further adapted, it can be argued that such a view is somewhat spurious. Instead, the idea that the Stoic *pneuma* is material was likely built upon criticisms of the Stoics.⁷³⁸ Further, it is questionable how much Faraday actually modified it within his field theory, especially if the Stoic *pneuma* was not in fact understood as material.⁷³⁹

Michael White argues that the Stoic *pneuma* is better understood as the ‘active principle’ of material objects rather than having a materiality of its own.⁷⁴⁰ Further, upon close examination of Sambursky’s work, it becomes clear that although the Stoic *pneuma* and Aristotelian *aether*, the latter of which was understood materially, began to be used interchangeably from a very early period prior to the Middle Ages, such a conflation mischaracterises the Stoic understanding of *pneuma*.⁷⁴¹ Instead, as Sambursky notes, ‘although the Stoics believed in the corporeal nature of the *pneuma*, they came to regard it as something not akin to matter, but rather to force.’⁷⁴² The Stoics described *pneuma* in ‘god-like’ terms, with Chrysippos referring to ultimate cause in the universe as a *pneumatic* force, or ‘*dynamis pneumatike*.’⁷⁴³ The idea of God as the pervasive dynamic force that brings about the corporeality of all things, as well as the ultimate cause of everything, will find extensive consonance within Pannenberg’s use of field theory.

⁷³⁸ Robert B. Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics: A Study of the De Mixtione with Preliminary Essays, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 84-87. Also see Sambursky, *Physics*, 36-39.

⁷³⁹ See, for instance, Sambursky, *Physics*, 40-41; White, ‘Stoic Natural Philosophy,’ 130-134; for Pannenberg’s view see ST1, 382; *TTN*, 39-40; Pannenberg, ‘Doctrine of Creation,’ 165; ST2, 80; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 61, and above.

⁷⁴⁰ White, ‘Stoic Natural Philosophy,’ 134-135.

⁷⁴¹ Sambursky, *Physics*, 34-35, 40.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 37.

This underlying concept of the Stoic *pneuma* seems particularly promising given that Pannenberg is careful to add that ‘the person of the Holy Spirit is not himself to be understood as the field but as a unique manifestation (singularity) of the field of the divine essentiality.’ In order to maintain a view of the Spirit’s work in creation as necessarily personal while still having ‘the character of dynamic field operations,’ the Spirit must ultimately be understood as ‘more than a field of divine essentiality.’⁷⁴⁴ Because of this, even though Pannenberg’s application of field theory in a theological context will bear strong similarities to the scientific presentation of field theory, it will differ in significant ways.⁷⁴⁵ In particular, Pannenberg’s unique understanding of Spirit, taken by him to be field theory’s modification of the Stoic *pneuma*, heavily influences Pannenberg’s doctrine of the Trinity. Because Pannenberg’s understanding of God’s dynamic interaction with the created world in terms of field is related to the understanding of God as Spirit, a discussion of God’s existence as Spirit, which necessarily becomes a discussion of the immanent Trinity and the relationship among the trinitarian persons, must follow.

2. The Holy Trinity and Field Theory

2.1 Spirit of God

As stated, Pannenberg maintains that his ‘critical reflection has dissolved the idea of *nous* as the subject of divine action’ because of the term’s incompatibility with the Hebrew *ruach* or the New Testament God who becomes incarnate and interacts directly with His creation.⁷⁴⁶ Instead, the adoption of field, seen as an adaptation of the Stoic *pneuma*, carries with it ‘some astonishing possibilities’ that allow for ‘a new understanding of the

⁷⁴⁴ ST2, 83-84; the ‘singularity’ of the spirit is explored in section 3.1 of this chapter.

⁷⁴⁵ ST2, 84.

⁷⁴⁶ ST1, 384.

relations between the trinitarian persons and the divine essence that is common to all of them.’⁷⁴⁷

Pannenberg notes that the New Testament uses the term ‘Spirit’ in two senses: the unified Godhead, and the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, specifically. This highlights some of the difficulty in defining the trinitarian relationship, particularly with regard to the Holy Spirit, who is united, yet distinct from the other two persons of the Trinity. While one may recognise that these are two distinct senses that the New Testament uses to speak of the ‘Spirit,’ it quickly becomes clear that the two senses are unavoidably intertwined and inseparable. Pannenberg insists that understanding the Spirit in terms of field transforms both senses of Spirit.⁷⁴⁸

Pannenberg begins his engagement field theory by focusing on the unity of the Godhead.⁷⁴⁹ Although orthodox formulations of the doctrine of God affirm co-equality or deny an intra-trinitarian hierarchy, Pannenberg argues that, by conceiving of the Spirit primarily along the terms of *nous* there is a natural and unintended, implied hierarchy. Because the Holy Spirit is seen as proceeding from the Father, the Holy Spirit, understood as *nous* distinct from the ‘Spirit’ of the Godhead, would be considered less primary than the Father.⁷⁵⁰

In order to avoid the inevitable tendency toward a hierarchical picture of the Trinity that comes with adopting a notion of the Holy Spirit as *nous*, Pannenberg maintains that an understanding of the divine Spirit as *pneuma* can yield a more egalitarian understanding of the Trinity. In contrast to *nous*, ‘the deity as field can find equal manifestation in all three persons’ who ‘are not independent of the Spirit of love that binds them. They are simply manifestations and forms—eternal forms—of the one divine essence.’⁷⁵¹ He

⁷⁴⁷ ST1, 383.

⁷⁴⁸ ST1, 383-384 noting John 4:24 for the former use.

⁷⁴⁹ ST1, 383; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 61.

⁷⁵⁰ ST1 383-384; this is expanded below.

⁷⁵¹ ST1 383; cf. Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 61.

describes each trinitarian person as a unique manifestation of the fullness of the same divine field or Spirit of love.⁷⁵²

This shared divine Spirit is also the Holy Spirit such that each person of the Trinity is equal as far as each one is a manifestation of the divine field, and the Holy Spirit is the manifestation of this divine field by acting as the unifying field between all three persons. Thus one might say that the Father and Son share a common essence through their unity to the Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit as this common essence that distinguishes the Spirit from the Father and Son.⁷⁵³ In this way the two senses of Spirit are understood, at least on one level, as indistinguishable. But Pannenberg acknowledges that, though understanding Spirit in terms of field may avoid a hierarchy with the Father as primary, it may lead to a hierarchy with the Holy Spirit as primary.

To avoid this problem, Pannenberg describes the distinctive nature of each person of the Trinity within a relational model of the Trinity. Because the Spirit proceeds from the Father and is received by the Son, the person of Father and Son can be distinct from each other in that one imparts and the other receives.⁷⁵⁴ The Spirit between them is the unifying factor (divine field of love) that ensures that even though distinct persons, they are still one essence. It is at this point that Pannenberg introduces a marked shift that grants the ‘new insight’ he had promised. Because the Spirit, existing only as field, ‘would be impersonal,’ Pannenberg declares that ‘the Spirit is not *just* the divine life that is common to both the Father and the Son. He also stands over against the Father and Son as his own centre of action.’ Or to expand further, ‘if the union [of Father and Son] is to include the Spirit as person, it must be assumed that the personal Spirit, as he glorified the Son in his relation

⁷⁵² Ibid.

⁷⁵³ ST1, 384.

⁷⁵⁴ ST1, 383.

to the Father and the Father through the Son, knows that he is united thereby to both.⁷⁵⁵

The Spirit exists as a distinct, yet interdependent person of the Trinity by virtue of his 'self-relation, which in each [person of the Trinity] is mediated by the relations to the other two persons.'⁷⁵⁶ In other words, each person of the Trinity is both distinct and interdependent as a member the Trinity, through the unification of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit expresses distinctness by acting as the source of trinitarian interdependence, and acting in relation to himself. Thus, the Holy Spirit is distinct precisely in his self-relation.

Although Pannenberg acknowledges that this conclusion is by no means a complete picture of the Trinity, he maintains that the primary thing we can say about the trinitarian persons is that they are fundamentally persons in relation and, as persons, are thus also active in the world in a manner that bears resemblance to the dynamic field of physics.⁷⁵⁷ Thus the active relation to the Spirit within the immanent Trinity may be said to be the unifying factor, but the manner that such a relation occurs also distinguishes each member of the Trinity from the other two.

While Pannenberg discusses the insights into intra-trinitarian relations that are offered through his application of field theory, he spends more time examining the implications of field theory upon his understanding of the economic Trinity. For Pannenberg, the economic Trinity is the primary means of understanding God. Through introducing dynamic field as the unifying element of the Trinity, Pannenberg, according to Grenz, 'brings the divinity of the three persons into the divine activity of history. Constitutive for this divinity is the activity of each person in view of the others. In this way the deity of the one God, that is, God's unity, is bound to the work of the three

⁷⁵⁵ ST1, 383-384.

⁷⁵⁶ ST1, 384; see also 384n.

⁷⁵⁷ ST1, 383, 384, 385; Wolfhart Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, S.J., and Carl E. Braaten, *Spirit, Faith, and Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 13; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 61.

persons in the world.’⁷⁵⁸ Said differently, for Pannenberg the immanent Trinity is best understood in light of the economic Trinity. Therefore, it is important to examine how Pannenberg describes the activity of God, the economic Trinity, in relation to dynamic field.

2.2 Divine Dynamic Field in light of Michael Polanyi’s work

One way that Pannenberg’s adoption of field theory purports to respond to the problems of materiality associated with the term *pneuma* is by relating *pneuma* to space or space-time instead of physical entities. Pannenberg reasons that the way in which the concept of field ‘can be used to interpret the idea of God as Spirit depends largely on how we relate time and space to God’s eternity.’⁷⁵⁹ Given the focus upon time in the previous chapter, it will be useful to focus our discussion where that one ended: that all of creation is moving toward a single goal, which Pannenberg terms ‘the end of history.’

Pannenberg approaches the concept of the end of history via Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit Priest who argued that humanity’s ultimate evolution would be found at ‘Omega Point.’⁷⁶⁰ Pannenberg’s primary reason for appealing to Teilhard is that Teilhard allows that there may be more than one form of energy. One that is material, which he terms ‘tangential energy,’ and one that is spiritual, which Teilhard terms ‘radial energy.’⁷⁶¹ However, Teilhard’s description of radial energy begins to fall apart, for Pannenberg, once it is examined to be largely indistinguishable from Aristotle’s final cause, which lapses into determinism.⁷⁶² The situation is only compounded upon

⁷⁵⁸ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 55-56.

⁷⁵⁹ ST1, 382.

⁷⁶⁰ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Wm. Collins Sons and Co, 1959), 42-44.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 64-65; 254-260; Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 29.

⁷⁶² TTN, 22-23; Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 29; Svein Rise, *The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Identity and Relevance*, trans. Brian MacNeil (Lewiston, NY, USA: Mellen University Press, 1997), 82.

further examination, for the later Teilhard clarifies his stance on ‘Omega Point,’ declaring that it is not an eschatological concept and has no true relation to the ‘end of history’ as Pannenberg understands it.⁷⁶³ Instead, Teilhard allows that history continues, but after the ‘Omega Point’ humanity has evolved to be part of the ‘Super Christ’ who is beyond history, in terminology akin to the pantheism of Brahmic Hinduism, where the individual ceases to exist independent of God.⁷⁶⁴

This, more than anything, leads Pannenberg to reject Teilhard’s discussion of Omega because, for Pannenberg, conscious, independent, existence of creatures continues after the ‘end of history,’ albeit in a non-temporal (i.e., eternal) frame of reference; the sustained independent existence of creation is a necessary aspect of the creative act itself for Pannenberg, both initially and in continuous creation, as noted in chapter two.⁷⁶⁵ Teilhard’s vision, though, does not require sustained independent existence, in part, because contingency is not central to it. Through his likening of the ‘Omega Point’ to the Thomist/Aristotelian final causation Teilhard relinquishes contingency for the sake of a fixed timeline. Creation is drawn on fixed temporal pathway, in Teilhard’s reasoning, toward the ‘Omega Point.’ It is a fixed destiny that reinterprets contingency in terms of the diachronic contingency of Aristotle abandoning the synchronic contingency of Scotus. This is because, as Teilhard describes Omega Point, God is overwhelmingly causing this end not only to occur, but to occur in a particular sort of way.

Still, Pannenberg suggests that Teilhard’s Omega Point might be salvaged through application of ‘the phenomena of an energy field’ understood in terms offered by Michael Polanyi.⁷⁶⁶ Specifically, Pannenberg

⁷⁶³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Let Me Explain*, ed. Jean-Pierre Demoulin, trans. Rene Hague et al. (London: Collins Sons and Co., 1970), 63-72.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷⁶⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Geist und Energie: Zur Phänomenologie Teilhards de Chardin,’ in *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie*, Vol II: *Natur und Mensch—und die Zukunft der Schöpfung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000), 62-63; 62n.

⁷⁶⁶ Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 29.

suggests that combining Michael Polanyi's concept of a 'morphogenic field' with Teilhard's 'vision of point Omega at work in the process of evolution' would mean that the causal influence of field upon matter could be a way of describing 'the power of the divine spirit' within creation.⁷⁶⁷ Pannenberg, as noted in the last chapter, accepts the idea that all of creation is moving toward a specified goal, linking this concept to both his anthropology and his understanding of the resurrection of Christ. However, the 'radial energy' described by Teilhard cannot be guided directly by the Omega Point. If it were to be directly guided, this would amount to a one-to-one causal influence from the future of the present and all intervening periods. However, we can suggest an indirect guidance, and thus adapt the concept of radial energy as guided by Omega through the medium of morphogenic field described by Polanyi.

To understand Polanyi's view of a morphogenic field, we must begin by noting that Polanyi argued against the scientific perspective that reduces all biological processes to chemical and mechanically physical actions.⁷⁶⁸ Morphogenesis is the process where a cell or embryo begins to take its unique shape or when it begins to mature at the cellular level. Polanyi argues that, rather than viewing this process as completely 'mechanically' determined by DNA, there is room to suggest an 'organismic' development that disallows the reduction of biology to a mechanistic process.

To make this argument, Polanyi adapts the concept of dynamic field. It is critical to note here that Polanyi is not using the term 'field' to describe a different process than the field from physics that we have been discussing in terms of Faraday and Einstein. Rather, Polanyi, a former student of Einstein, uses the same core concept of field as Einstein, showing the broad potential of the 'field' concept through its biological application.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁷ *TTN*, 23-24.

⁷⁶⁸ Pertaining to the branch of science known as 'physics.'

⁷⁶⁹ Harry Prosch, *Michael Polanyi: A Critical Exposition* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1986), pp. 241-242; see also Thomas F. Torrance, 'The Integration of Form in Natural and in Theological Science,' in *Science, Medicine and Man*, ed. Peter J. M. McEwan, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 154.

Polanyi adapts the field concept in such a way that it may be understood as the guiding process of cellular development that allows for an undetermined (contingent) process of each unique cell's development because each instance is a unique application of the dynamic field. For Polanyi, rather than the super-dense point from which the universe began (or which possibly exists at the centre of a black hole), the singularity is the way that the undefined field eventually expresses itself, and thus might be understood in terms of any manifestation of the field. Specifically, Polanyi suggests that DNA provides the information necessary for the 'boundary conditions' of a cell without exactly determining every aspect of the cell's growth. He notes, for example, that the regeneration properties of an embryonic sea urchin do not always produce identical sea urchins.⁷⁷⁰ Nevertheless, there are certain key ways in the process of each cell's development which suggest there is something in addition to DNA that guides the development or, in the case of the sea urchin, regeneration of the cells.

Polanyi explains that, in these developments 'we see an integrative power at work here, characterized...as a "field", which guides the growth of the embryonic fragments.'⁷⁷¹ Continuing his discussion of a biological field, Polanyi notes that the field is both the causal guiding force behind cellular growth and maturation, and is somehow fully integrated into each individual cell. While Polanyi notes that the study of 'epigenetics'⁷⁷² may highlight one aspect of that 'field,' he is sceptical that it can fully account for all of the morphogenic and regenerative properties of life.⁷⁷³ Polanyi concludes his argument by stating that 'once "field"-like powers guiding regeneration and morphogenesis can be recognized... I think the evidence for them will be

⁷⁷⁰ Michael Polanyi, 'Life's Irreducible Structure,' in *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*, ed. Marjorie Green (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1969), 231-232.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁷⁷² Epigenetics is concerned with inherited environmental factors that influence the expression of DNA.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 232, 234.

found to be convincing,' but he gives no indication as to what this evidence may actually look like.⁷⁷⁴ Still, given the increased interest in a 'field theory of information' it seems that contemporary science is advancing upon the idea that information, which Polanyi noted exists biologically as DNA, can give guidance to a non-physical causal field.⁷⁷⁵

For our purposes, this demonstrates a close association between the non-physical field and causation upon the physical world. More directly, Polanyi suggests that while DNA provides the overall information for cellular construction, it is the morphogenic field that determines the particular expression of this DNA. The morphogenic field, as described by Polanyi, provides the 'boundary conditions' in which the contingency or freedom of individual genetic expression at the cellular and morphological, or organ-level, can occur. It is not that these processes are random, nor that they are determined entirely by environmental factors, as evidenced by the sea urchin, but that cells are allowed freedom⁷⁷⁶ to a particular outcome, which may be obtained through a variety of avenues. It is these boundary conditions, that nevertheless encourage a certain amount of non-determined action, that comprise the morphogenic field. While the individual cells may not have a volition, there is strong reason to believe, concludes Polanyi, that certain morphological structures, such as the brain, do determine future growth, guided by this morphogenic field, in accordance with an independent will.⁷⁷⁷

Polanyi's 'morphogenic field' applied to Teilhard's Omega point, along with Teilhard's concept of radial energy, resonates with Pannenberg's argument that the Spirit, as field, acts from the eschaton, manifesting himself

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., 225-239; see also Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1958), 420-425.

⁷⁷⁵ See, for instance, James P. O'Dwyer and Jessica L. Green, 'Field Theory for Biogeography: A Spatially Explicit Model for Predicting Patterns of Biodiversity,' in *Ecology Letters* 13, no. 1 (Jan 2010): 87-95; and Jessica A. Bolker, 'Modularity in Development and Why it Matters to Evo-Devo,' *Zoology* 40, no. 5 (2000): 770-776.

⁷⁷⁶ Although Polanyi often uses the word 'freedom,' we should take this more precisely to be non-random contingency, rather to think of individual cells possessing a volition.

⁷⁷⁷ Michael Polanyi, 'Transcendence and Self-Expression,' *Soundings* 53, no. 1 (1970): 88-94.

causally in the whole of creation, down to the cellular level. Thus the ‘radial energy’ of Teilhard is guided, not in an absolute sense by the Omega Point as Teilhard claimed, but via Polanyi’s ‘morphogenic field.’ In this way, the Omega Point provides a boundary condition. There is a determined, or fixed with regard to its nature/character, end to history, but the manner in which that end is achieved remains open.

From this, we might describe the causal activity of God in terms of dynamic field such that God exerts a causal influence upon all of creation down to the cellular level and even to the molecular level, without overwhelming that same creation. This is because, as Polanyi noted, such a causal field still allows for the development of cells, or the causal interaction of molecules, to occur contingently. If both Teilhard and Polanyi are taken together, then one may speak of God acting from the future upon our present as a field. To speak of God’s action in the present is to speak of the economic Trinity, while God’s existence in eternity or from the future is understood in terms of the immanent Trinity. These two diverse ways of speaking about the Trinity are brought together through Pannenberg’s understanding of the relation between the immanent and economic Trinities. In order to seriously engage the link between the immanent and economic Trinity, particularly in the manner Pannenberg does, we must also examine the way in which Pannenberg understands Rahner’s famous dictum linking the economic and immanent Trinity.

3 The Immanent and Economic Trinity

3.1 Rahner and Moltmann

It would be an understatement to say that Karl Rahner’s axiom ‘The “economic” Trinity is the “immanent” Trinity and the “immanent” Trinity is the “economic” Trinity’ has made a significant impact on contemporary trinitarian studies.⁷⁷⁸ While it would be well beyond the scope of this study to

⁷⁷⁸ See, Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), 22. Although exact definitions for ‘economic Trinity’ and ‘immanent Trinity’ vary widely, and how Rahner’s rule/axiom is interpreted depends in part on these definitions, the ‘economic Trinity’ can be understood to be connected in some way to God’s actions in our world, while

give an in-depth analysis of Rahner's axiom and subsequent reactions to it, a general overview of Rahner's position, followed by Moltmann's response, will provide the necessary background for discussing Pannenberg's own engagement with the axiom.

In developing his axiom, Rahner emphasises the Trinity as three persons,⁷⁷⁹ distinct in their personhood and united in an eternal mystery that is given by revelation, unknowable through empirical or any other means.⁷⁸⁰ Further, while it is not incorrect to refer to the incarnation as God becoming man, Rahner emphasises that incarnation is unique to the Logos: 'only he is man.'⁷⁸¹ Each person of the Trinity distinguishes himself to us by his own 'hypostatic function',⁷⁸² the Father is the 'unoriginate one,' unmade and un-generated; the Son is begotten and incarnates; and the Spirit is breathed and descends.⁷⁸³ At its core, Rahner's claim is meant to emphasise the present reality of God revealed in salvation history as Trinity, graciously present to humanity through the unique missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, through whom we know the Father.⁷⁸⁴ Rahner seeks to maintain a soteriological focus on the Trinity in contrast to the rationalistic way that the 'economic Trinity

the 'immanent Trinity' is understood to be something like God as he relates to himself, and/or in eternity.

⁷⁷⁹ Though as noted below, Rahner prefers the term 'subsistances' to 'persons.' Note this is distinct from subsistence. The subsistence is connected with *substantia* itself connected with *ustantia* and *hypostantia*. We may consider the term, as Rahner uses it, to be roughly analogous to 'identity.' God may have more than one identity, while still being the same ultimate substance.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 50-51.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., 10-12, 23; Rahner recognises this as a departure from the traditional understanding of circumincession.

⁷⁸² *Hypostasis* may be understood as person, in a different sense. Rahner may prefer 'subsistence' because it allows him to differentiate the divine Christ from the human Jesus, but these two are 'hypostatically unified,' into the one 'hypostatis' of Jesus. Rahner's use of terminology is highly technical, and there is certainly not universal agreement on the best way to engage in this discussion.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., 86.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., 74-75.

was not considered until many other doctrines had been discussed.’⁷⁸⁵ Rahner argues that his axiom navigates between modalism and tritheism, while offering a genuine trinitarian conception of God.⁷⁸⁶

Jürgen Moltmann, however, argues that Rahner is in danger of falling into modalism, owing to what he sees as Rahner’s misunderstanding of the modern notion of ‘person.’⁷⁸⁷ Rahner posits that the modern use of ‘person’ suggests a highly individualised personality with its own ‘centre of activity,’ which would create too stark a separation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and therefore suggests that instead the term ‘subsistence’ be used, rather than ‘person’ in discussion of the Trinity.⁷⁸⁸ Moltmann, however, argues that ‘person’ is properly understood as an ‘I-Thou’ relationship, characterised in the Trinity as a love from an I to a Thou. Thus, for Moltmann, there can be no mutual love or trinitarian relationship, or even, therefore, a trinitarian person, without a ‘Thou.’ A mutual love is requisite for the Holy Spirit to exist as the mutual love between the Father and Son, according to a social model.⁷⁸⁹

Still, Moltmann affirms Rahner’s claim that ‘the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity’ and vice versa. For Moltmann, the focus begins at the cross; the Trinity cannot be understood apart from the cross for that is the central event in revelation history and the core identity of both the economic and immanent Trinity is found in the cross. The cross is so central that it is not enough to say that the economic Trinity ‘reveals the immanent Trinity [in the cross]; it [the cross] also has a retroactive effect on it [the immanent

⁷⁸⁵ Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 207.

⁷⁸⁶ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 112

⁷⁸⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 144.

⁷⁸⁸ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 103-113.

⁷⁸⁹ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 145-148; Moltmann also argues that the self-communication necessary for Rahner’s trinitarian model is non-sensical if there is not an ‘I’ communicating with a ‘Thou’ in the trinitarian relationship; thus he rejects, among other things, Rahner’s notion of the Father’s communication as ‘self-communication.’

Trinity].'⁷⁹⁰ The relationship of the Trinity to the world, therefore, is also a mutual relationship, and, as such, the Christ event impacts the eternal (immanent) life of the Trinity, and this effect continues throughout the 'history of the Spirit.' The effect of the cross is completed at the end of history, through the work of the Spirit within history.⁷⁹¹ The influence of the cross upon the Trinity is both eschatological and exerts a retroactive influence upon the immanent Trinity back to creation. In this way, Moltmann emphasises not only the cross, but also the eschatological effect of the cross upon creation as having an impact upon the trinitarian relationship, until 'the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent Trinity.'⁷⁹² Thus, for Moltmann, Rahner's axiom becomes a way of describing the influence of historical occurrence upon the Trinity, and vice versa, rather than a way of elucidating historical revelation as expressed through the creeds.⁷⁹³

3.2 The Primacy of the Economic Trinity in Pannenberg

Pannenberg also enters into dialogue with Rahner's axiom, but first suggests that Barth may have addressed this same issue 'in the prolegomena to' his *Church Dogmatics*, as well as in the second chapter of the first volume.⁷⁹⁴ In referring to Barth's discussion of 'the manifestation of the Trinity in the economy of salvation,' Pannenberg suggests that Barth's claims correspond 'to the realization that the immanent Trinity is identical with the economic Trinity.'⁷⁹⁵ Pannenberg allows for the possibility that this apparent 'unity of the immanent and economic Trinity...set forth in Barth's discussion'

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 161; See also Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, Arise! God's Future for Humanity and the Earth*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 68-71.

⁷⁹² Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 158-161.

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ ST1, 328.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 405. Cf. 328; Citing *CD I/1*, 13-15.

may simply be a ‘shortening of perspective due to the Christocentric concept of revelation,’ but this apparent unity of the immanent and economic Trinity in Barth may have served as the impetus for Rahner’s statement.⁷⁹⁶

By grounding the background to Rahner’s axiom in Barth, Pannenberg lays the ground for his eventual claim that, in acting upon the created world, God ‘has made himself dependent’ upon that creation.⁷⁹⁷ A basis for this connection can be found in Barth’s claim that ‘Yahweh does not stand above the covenant, but in it.’ However, Pannenberg disregards Barth’s additional qualifier ‘yet He is also not under it’⁷⁹⁸ and argues that the act of creation not only produces a strong connection between the economic and immanent Trinity, but makes God subject to the covenant he inaugurates at creation. There is still some continuity with Barth for, as Pannenberg argues, God subjugates himself willingly and is not subjugated as one who is conquered.⁷⁹⁹ The act of creation is, for Pannenberg, grounded in the active presence of the Holy Spirit within the present world. So, when Ted Peters notes that, for Pannenberg, ‘the persons of the trinitarian Godhead and the independent creation are singularities arising from the dynamic field of the Spirit’s activity,’ we should immediately begin to draw connections between the Spirit’s activity through creation and the relation of this action to the Trinity *in toto*.⁸⁰⁰

Like Moltmann, Pannenberg describes the created world and the trinitarian life of God as interwoven through the active working of the Spirit. Pannenberg’s view of the Spirit as the unifying bond between the persons of the immanent Trinity,⁸⁰¹ and his claim that creation is animated by that same

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., 328.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., 329.

⁷⁹⁸ CD IV/1, 25.

⁷⁹⁹ The background of conquering and subjugation for the covenant, and its relation to Pannenberg’s claims, will be discussed below.

⁸⁰⁰ Peters, ‘Introduction,’ *TTN*, 14.

⁸⁰¹ See above.

uncreated life giving spirit, which he equates with the divine breath, adds an interesting dimension to discussion of the economic and immanent Trinities.⁸⁰² In light of his description of the role of the Spirit, Pannenberg suggests that, by ‘extending the thought of Rahner, one might thus say that creation is brought into the relations of the trinitarian persons and participates in them.’ Additionally, through the interaction of Spirit and Son with the world, ‘the Father, too, stands in relation to the history of the economy of salvation.’⁸⁰³ By relating the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity so strongly with the created world, Pannenberg reminds us again of the tension inherent in the very act of creation, first discussed in chapters one and two, that is only resolved at the eschaton.

Related to this discussion of the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity, Pannenberg draws on Hegel’s philosophy to argue that ‘the concept of essence presupposes an existence into whose essence we inquire.’⁸⁰⁴ For our present discussion, this means that, for Pannenberg, the divine essence of the Trinity (immanent Trinity) presupposes a real existence that is observable in some way within material space-time (economic Trinity) which is ‘more basic’ than this corresponding essence, at least as concerns knowledge of God. Given Pannenberg’s insistence that revelation is grounded in historical event, as discussed in chapter three, it makes sense that he would ground knowledge of the Trinity in history as well. Our primary means of epistemic access to the Trinity is, therefore, through the historical action of the economic Trinity, which in turn reveals the nature of the immanent Trinity, understood in part by the evidence of the economic Trinity and in part through the exercise of reason.

Continuing this line of thought, Pannenberg argues that ‘the divine persons...are concretions of the divine reality as Spirit. They are individual

⁸⁰² Pannenberg, ‘Spirit and Mind,’ 148; the concept of Spirit as ‘life-giving force’ is discussed below.

⁸⁰³ ST1, 328-329.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

aspects of the dynamic field of the eternal Godhead.⁸⁰⁵ In other words, our primary knowledge about God comes from our experience of the divine persons as manifestations of the active Spirit, whom we are closely associating with field in Pannenberg's theology. Pannenberg amplifies this connection between our knowledge about God and the present, observable work of the Spirit when he declares that 'the Father and Son have their unity, and therefore their divine essence, only through their relation to the Spirit; and the Spirit is a *distinct hypostasis* only by his relation to the distinction and fellowship of the Father and the Son in their differentiation.'⁸⁰⁶ Following this logic, then, the Spirit not only serves as the unifying element of all creation, by virtue of being the source of all creation, but also serves as the unifying element within the Immanent Trinity. Rather than an entirely novel claim, however, one can see the basis for this in a wide range of 'social Trinity' models, like those of John Zizioulas and Stanley Grenz, which claim heritage in the Augustinian model, though these might not be as extreme as Pannenberg's suggested interpretation.⁸⁰⁷

Setting aside, for the moment, Pannenberg's more radical claim regarding the ontology of the trinitarian persons, let us first examine Pannenberg's discussion of the related epistemological issues of the Trinity, which is how God is known as Trinity. Pannenberg cites the ancient Christian creeds to argue that, while the Father is known as a person through his distinction from the Son (the Father is the begetter), and the Son is likewise known through his distinction from the Father (the Son is the begotten), the Spirit is known as a separate person through his distinction both from Father and Son and through his distinctive action as the unifying divine essence of all

⁸⁰⁵ ST1, 430; here the term 'concretion' should be taken in what is probably its loosest sense: anything that is made real or genuine.

⁸⁰⁶ ST1, 430; emphasis added.

⁸⁰⁷ See Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 75-76; Patricia Fox, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 195-197, 199-201.

three persons of the Trinity precisely in their own distinction.⁸⁰⁸ Pannenberg views the Holy Spirit both as ‘one of the personal concretions of the essence of God as Spirit in distinction from the Father and Son’ and as the ‘dynamic field’ that is manifest in such a way as to unify the trinitarian persons.⁸⁰⁹ Thus, ‘on the one side the Spirit and love constitute the common essence of the deity...on the other they come forth as separate hypostasis in the Holy Spirit.’⁸¹⁰

In light of this, Pannenberg can apply the language reserved for the Holy Spirit to the divine essence, what he refers to as simply Spirit. This will prove particularly important later in the chapter since Pannenberg finds the linguistic connection between the dynamic field of physics and the Stoics to find its most suitable connection to Christian theology via the language of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that he states ‘the idea of the divine life as a dynamic field sees the divine Spirit who unites the three persons as proceeding from the Father, received by the Son, and common to both, so that precisely in this way he is the force field of their fellowship that is distinct from them both.’⁸¹¹ This identification of the person, and the activity of the Holy Spirit as both distinct from the other persons of the Trinity, in that he acts directly within our history and is radically present to creation, and as the uniting presence among the Trinity, means that our language about the Holy Spirit, acting within the world, directly applies to God, as eternal Trinity. It is in this way that Pannenberg interprets Rahner’s axiom.

Through identifying the immanent Trinity with economic Trinity, Pannenberg asserts that the Godhead’s self-revelation to humanity in history is primarily through God’s observable action on earth. Knowledge about the Trinity as Trinity can only come from the action of the Trinity in history. Moreover, so tangible is this activity that these actions are open to observation

⁸⁰⁸ ST1 430; ST2, 84.

⁸⁰⁹ ST2, 83.

⁸¹⁰ ST1, 429.

⁸¹¹ ST1, 383.

by anyone.⁸¹² This is all, of course, in distinction from the interpretation offered by the dialectic theology paradigmatic of Bultmann as discussed in the second and third chapters. The Holy Spirit provides more knowledge of the immanent Trinity than the Father or Son, despite being ‘manifest only in distinction from’ the other two trinitarian persons, because ‘his working in creation has more of the character of dynamic field operations,’ than either the Son or Father, and so we can understand God’s causal action from eternity through the picture of it given via the Spirit’s ‘working in creation.’⁸¹³

However, we are here immediately presented with a problem. If Pannenberg wants to ground our knowledge of God in the historical action of God, should it not be the case that the Son, who acted most visibly in history, would be the epistemological foundation for such knowledge, and not the Spirit? Pannenberg acknowledges this inclination by noting that our knowledge of God was grounded historically first in the actions and words of the incarnate Christ.⁸¹⁴ According to Pannenberg’s interpretation of the biblical text, Jesus revealed the nature of the Trinity primarily through the distinction of himself from the Father: the Son is subject to the Father as separate person.⁸¹⁵

According to Pannenberg, the early church did not receive these statements of Jesus, concerning his relationship with the Father, as indication of the Trinity in their own right, but only in light of the resurrection. For Pannenberg, ‘the starting points for the history of primitive Christian Christology and also for that of the doctrine of the Trinity which arose out of primitive Christology’ are found only in light of the resurrection of Jesus, which itself serves as a ‘divine confirmation of the claim’ that Jesus made during his historical earthly life.⁸¹⁶ So the historical development of

⁸¹² RAH, 125-129, 135-139.

⁸¹³ ST2, 83-84.

⁸¹⁴ ST1, 259-265.

⁸¹⁵ ST1, 264.

⁸¹⁶ ST1, 264.

Christology, which, in light of the statements of Jesus necessitates the development of a doctrine of the Trinity, must be grounded in the historic event of the resurrection.

Before directly examining the resurrection event in light of the Trinity, however, Pannenberg returns to the actions of Jesus for which the resurrection acted as confirmation. Specifically, Pannenberg notes that the description of the ‘words and works of Jesus in the Gospels’ acts primarily as ‘an expression of the presence of the Spirit of God within him’ and in this way leading to a doctrine of the Trinity. As Pannenberg summarises, ‘the fellowship of Jesus as Son with God as Father can obviously be stated only if there is reference to a third as well, the Holy Spirit.’⁸¹⁷ This, in turn, means that our discussion of field in relation to the Spirit will have direct bearing upon our understanding of the Godhead as a whole.

Moving now to a more direct understanding of the Trinity in light of the resurrection, one should recall the discussion in the previous chapter which noted that the resurrection, for Pannenberg as for the earliest followers of Jesus, was necessarily an eschatological event. The eschatological hope, grounded in the ancient Israelite view, is that the Spirit of God would be ‘present with eschatological ultimacy as an abiding gift’ to the people of God. This was exemplified, for the early believers, ‘especially in the expectation of the Spirit-filled Messiah.’⁸¹⁸

For Pannenberg, the relation of Jesus as ‘Kyrios’ to God as Father is only understood in the Spirit’s working as the ‘mediation of the fellowship’ between the two into which the believer is invited.⁸¹⁹ It is ‘the involvement of the Spirit in God’s presence in the work of Jesus and in the fellowship of the Son with the Father’ that resulted in ‘the Christian understanding of God...in

⁸¹⁷ ST1 267.

⁸¹⁸ ST1, 267.

⁸¹⁹ ST1, 267-268.

the doctrine of the Trinity and not in a biunity of the Father and the Son.⁸²⁰

Thus, while the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity is found in an historical event that is central to personal identity of Jesus, the resurrection, the development of the doctrine, requires the activity of the other two persons of the Trinity in relation to the Son.

In particular, the Spirit is the foundation for our understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Spirit as the Spirit of God is only revealed as both distinct from and equal to the Father in the historic message and actions of Jesus. It is not the message of Jesus primarily that reveals the Trinity, but ‘the content of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ’ in his historical actions, and the historical milieu into which that message occurs, that reveals the Trinity.⁸²¹ This content acts as revelation in light of the confirmation of the message of Jesus provided through the resurrection accomplished in the power of the Spirit. Having demonstrated that the basis for a discussion of the Trinity is found in the Spirit, we now turn to the radical claim of Pannenberg concerning his doctrine of the Trinity.

Pannenberg begins questioning the legitimacy of the early theologians’ decision to describe the Son and Spirit as having their origin in the Father only, and not also in relation to each other, such that the Father also begets the Spirit, and sends forth the Son, and the Son sends the Spirit and is the begotten of the Father. Pannenberg argues that this focus on the action of Father toward the Spirit and Son, without simultaneous consideration of the action of the Spirit and Son toward the Father, creates a hierarchy within the Trinity.⁸²² To support his argument, Pannenberg turns to Athanasius, whom he notes ‘argued forcibly against the Arians that the Father would not be the Father without the Son. Does that not mean that in some way the deity of the Father has to be

⁸²⁰ ST1, 268.

⁸²¹ ST1. 304-305, emphasis added.

⁸²² ST1, 311-312.

dependent on the relation to the Son?’⁸²³ To further explore this issue, he examines the reign of God from the perspective of the economic Trinity.

In particular, for Pannenberg the Kingdom of God is the ‘handing over of rule to the Son’ who, in turn, hands it ‘back again to the Father in the eschatological consummation.’ Moreover, this handing of authority from the Father to the Son and back again is revealed in the economic Trinity, not the immanent Trinity. That is, it is only ‘to be inferred from the mutual relations between the *historical person* of Jesus and the Father.’⁸²⁴ For Pannenberg, this handing over of power and back again is ‘to be seen also as a defining of the intra-trinitarian relations between the two,’ of Father and Son. However, it does not constitute two separate acts, but rather a single act where the two persons ‘interpenetrate one another.’⁸²⁵

Further, the handing over of authority from the Father to the Son, as historical person, means that the sovereignty of the *Father*, as God, ‘is now dependent upon’ the historical action of Jesus because the Kingdom of God is integral to the nature of the Father, contrary to the arguments of Barth and Athanasius, for whom the Kingdom is vital, but separate from the identity of God.⁸²⁶ Thus, for Pannenberg, the *ontos* of the immanent Trinity is made dependent upon the action of the economic Trinity. This is seen particularly well in the accounts of the passion that are concerned both the human nature of Christ as well as ‘the trinitarian life of God. In the death of Jesus the deity of his God and Father was at issue.’⁸²⁷

However, the event of the crucifixion does ‘not merely bring the deity of the Father as well as the Son into question. It refers [also] to the work of the

⁸²³ ST1, 312.

⁸²⁴ ST1, 312, emphasis added.

⁸²⁵ ST1, 313.

⁸²⁶ ST1, 313. Citing Barth, CD I/1, 349 and Athanasius, *Contra Arian*, 1.21.

⁸²⁷ ST1, 314, citing Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York, 1974), 151.

Spirit, who as the Creator of all life raises Jesus from the dead.’⁸²⁸ Pannenberg goes on to cite various references in Scripture that refer to the resurrecting power of the Spirit, but focuses the majority of his attention on the ‘life-giving’ nature of the Spirit, which is addressed in the next chapter.⁸²⁹ Not only is the Spirit the grounding of our doctrine of the Trinity, the Spirit also, as Augustine notes, exists as the love that unites the Father and Son ontologically.⁸³⁰

Pannenberg’s more radical claim extends this discussion further to reject outright the Augustinian notion of double procession of the Spirit from both Father and Son, arguing that the *filioque* attachment to the Western Nicene Creed is altogether unnecessary, disagreeing with Barth’s defence for the inclusion of the term. Further, Pannenberg considers Moltmann’s reformulation of procession of the Spirit to be a non-starter because it does not address the fundamental, ancient description about the Spirit. Specifically, the biblical witness describes the Spirit as sent from the Father and received by the Son.⁸³¹

Pannenberg pushes the boundaries of our discussion of the three trinitarian persons well beyond the claims of Rahner, by insisting that each trinitarian person exists ‘as living realizations of separate centres of actions.’⁸³² Citing R. W. Jenson’s argument on this point, Pannenberg states that the self-distinction of each member of the Trinity not only affirms each

⁸²⁸ ST1, 314. Note that I have deviated from the translation here by replacing the word ‘both’ with the word ‘also’ (noted by parenthesis). The reason for this deviation is that my rendering makes correct grammatical sense, while the rendering found in Bromiley et al. is particularly confusing (there is no clear dual referent to make sense of ‘both’) and the translation ‘also’ is an acceptable rendering.

⁸²⁹ ST1, 314-316.

⁸³⁰ ST1, 316, citing Augustine, *De Trinitate* 6.5.7.

⁸³¹ ST, 316-319.

⁸³² ST1, 319-320, quote from 320.

person's own identity, but that this self-distinction is constitutive of the divinity of each person of the Trinity.⁸³³

The 'constitution' of the Trinity is only arrived at as a 'result of the common operation of the three persons' within history.⁸³⁴ Pannenberg's argument here is that to describe the Spirit as proceeding from both the Father and the Son is to understand the action of the Spirit in the exact opposite manner it should be understood. The Spirit does not proceed from the Father and from the Son, but proceeds from the Father to the Son and brings the Son to the Father. While the Son is distinct in his being begotten from the Father and being incarnate in observable human history, 'the inner dynamic of [the Son's] divine life finds expression in its concreteness as Spirit and love.'⁸³⁵

Here, we are brought to the radical claim of Pannenberg: If the deity of the Son is preserved only as a result of the action of the Spirit, as Pannenberg has claimed, and if the Son, in light of the incarnation, must be understood as a 'concretion' of the Spirit, then the Spirit is epistemologically prior to the Son, that is the Son can only be known as the Son by the actions of the Spirit. This is not to say, however, that the Spirit or the Father is divine without the Son, only that a true understanding of the Trinity as coequal persons within a single essence would preclude the constitutional subjugation of any person in the Trinity to any other. The Spirit's actions in history as ontological field are not only the primary source of revelation, but constitute the very nature of the Trinity.

At this juncture, it becomes increasingly clear that Pannenberg's description of the Trinity requires that we consider the Trinity primarily in terms of the economic Trinity. Yet Pannenberg affirms Rahner's claim that the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, such that we cannot neglect the nature of the immanent Trinity. Only in this way can we seriously meet Karl Barth's demand that 'we base the doctrine of the Trinity on the revelation of

⁸³³ ST1, 323-324, citing Jenson, *Triune Identity*, p. 119.

⁸³⁴ ST1, 325.

⁸³⁵ ST1, 430.

God in Jesus Christ,' something Pannenberg argues Barth did not achieve with respect to the immanent Trinity.⁸³⁶ Because of the incarnation, the history of the world becomes the history of God as immanent Trinity. As noted previously, it is not only the Son and the Spirit who must be revealed as divine in the events of the crucifixion and resurrection, but 'the deity of the Father was itself called into question by the death of Jesus on the cross if it was the death of the Son,' a point which Pannenberg grounds in Eberhard Jüngel and Moltmann.⁸³⁷

Pannenberg's conclusion is that 'the divine essence can no longer be thought of as an unrelated identity outside the world.'⁸³⁸ Instead, the sovereignty of God in his immanence is grounded upon his actions in history; the question of divine sovereignty and human freedom only makes sense in light of history. Yet, Pannenberg is not claiming the absorption of the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity. Instead, for Pannenberg, the 'Trinity has sense and significance only if God is the same in salvation history as he is from eternity.'⁸³⁹ We must reject 'the idea of a divine becoming in history, as though the trinitarian God were the result of history' for such a description would make God involuntarily subject to historical processes and thus not truly divine.⁸⁴⁰ Rather, the resurrection of Jesus is only new life if it is tied to the resurrection of the dead at the eschaton, and only salvific if it is God's decision to make himself dependent. For, in the latter case, God would be impotent to change the course of history, while creation would likewise be subject entirely to a history that exists beyond its control. Without God's free choice from his sovereignty to make himself subject to the outcome of history, there is no sense of freedom for creation.

⁸³⁶ ST1, 327.

⁸³⁷ ST1, 328-329, citing Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 187ff, 227ff, and Jüngel, 'Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottes,' in *Unterwegs zur Sache* (Tübingen, 1972), 119.

⁸³⁸ ST1, 364, 366-367.

⁸³⁹ ST1, 331.

⁸⁴⁰ ST1, 331.

Who God has revealed himself to be in his universally observable actions is who God actually is; God has been revealed as knowable through his interaction with the created world, even if he is beyond that world. Pannenberg states that, while the Father maintains his transcendence, because of his vicarious relational action of ‘the creation of the world and the sending of his Son and Spirit to work in it, *he [the Father] has made himself dependent upon the course of history.*’⁸⁴¹ God the Father is distinct from the world and beyond its comprehension, but places himself in the world by the action of the Spirit.

Despite the declaration of God’s dependence upon history, Pannenberg is emphatic that the transcendence of God, and particularly the Father, is not lost.⁸⁴² He argues that his claims do

not mean that God’s transcendence vanishes pantheistically in the infinity of nature, as in Spinozism, nor that it is simply an element in the divine process of producing and dissolving the world, as in Hegel, nor finally that it is just a correlate of the concept of the world, as in the metaphysics of Whitehead.⁸⁴³

Instead, God remains transcendent while drawing the world toward that same transcendence by his actions in nature. In his act of self-subjugation, God maintains a distinction between himself and his creation, thereby allowing for their freedom, lest his theology lapse into pantheism. Whether Pannenberg is able to maintain this distinction in light of criticisms of panentheism will be addressed in the next chapter.

Pannenberg goes further still by suggesting that ‘in an advance on Rahner the person of the Father is thus implicated also in the course of

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.; emphasis added.

⁸⁴² Ibid., 328.

⁸⁴³ Ibid., 367. Admittedly, these definitions are not without dispute. Hegel himself, in his later philosophy, would argue against this interpretation of Spinoza and himself. Yet, for our purposes at present, we are more concerned with Pannenberg’s perception of his position, which will be evaluated in more detail in chapter six, than with the accuracy of his interpretation of Spinoza or Hegel.

salvation history, and indeed in such a way that the progress of events decides concerning his deity as well as the deity of the Son.’ The course of the created world’s history is a determining factor in the nature of the Trinity, and while Pannenberg admits that ‘Rahner did not go this far,’ he asserts that ‘Only by this step, however, can we give life to his [*Rahner’s*] thesis regarding the identity of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, for now the immanent Trinity itself, the deity of the trinitarian God, is at issue in the events of history.’ The eschatological event within history, of which the resurrection is a prolepsis, as discussed in the last chapter, is the final unification of the economic and immanent Trinities who, in light of the resurrection occurring in the midst of history, are already united.

This talk of the end of history brings the discussion back to Teilhard’s Omega point. Recall that Pannenberg suggested that Teilhard’s concept of energy could be modified through the adaption of field, as in Polanyi’s writings, in order to maintain the transcendence of the all-penetrating energy together with the freedom of independent creatures. Through the application of field theory to evolution, as in Polanyi, Pannenberg suggests it can ‘offer a modern language that possibly can express the biblical idea of the divine spirit as the power of life that transcends the living organism and the same time is intimately present in the individual.’⁸⁴⁴ In this way, we will be able to connect the sovereignty of God, identified as the end of history akin to Teilhard’s Omega Point, with the contingent actions of creatures within history.

For now, we should keep in mind that the epistemic primacy of the economic Trinity over the immanent Trinity for our understanding of the nature of God, as described by Pannenberg, means that God must be understood in light of his actions in creation, which is itself history. Given that we know God through history, we can now also begin to address the other fundamental concern of our thesis, relating human freedom to divine sovereignty.

⁸⁴⁴ *TTN*, 24.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid the groundwork upon which the constructive work of the next chapter will build. We began by taking the conclusion of chapter four, that God's sovereignty is secured in that the end of history is not only defined, but has been seen proleptically within the course of history, and began to develop the manner in which we can understand history to remain contingent. While not fully addressed, the groundwork necessary to providing this critical answer was given through an examination of Pannenberg's use of the 'field' concept in modern physics. In particular, the connection that the field concept makes between space and time, as evidenced by Einstein's relativity physics, and the philosophical background for field theory in Stoicism will prove integral in the final chapter for giving a clear articulation of Pannenberg's use of the 'field' concept. There the connection of the field concept to the Stoic *pneuma*, as well as the Stoic use of *tonos* will be placed in connection with the creative impact of a *pneumatic* field as it connects to time and history. To reconcile God's sovereignty, which we may connect most directly with the immanent Trinity, with human freedom, we must understand the role of the Spirit not only within the intra-trinitarian relation, as given in this chapter, but also as the Spirit is involved in the act of creation, first introduced for this thesis in chapter one, but which will continue to drive the argument in the final chapter. The process of history, and the way in which these disparate ideas of sovereignty and freedom might be reconciled, is found through the application of field theory as will be explained the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6- THE DYNAMIC FIELD OF HISTORY: SOVEREIGNTY WORKING THROUGH HUMAN FREEDOM

The prior chapter introduced God's action as Spirit via field and examined how this potentially impacted the doctrine of the Trinity. While Pannenberg's use of field theory was examined generally, along with its philosophical background, the specific manner in which this offers a constructive description of the nature of divine causation was not given directly. Instead, the chapter, through examining the impact of field upon the Trinity, moved to emphasise the role of the economic Trinity for theological concerns above that of the immanent Trinity, while still affirming Rahner's dictum. In so doing, the conversation was brought back to the issue of history in relation to God's actions. In order to demonstrate how articulating Pannenberg's overarching theological project as a theology of history gives a new approach to the tension between human freedom and divine sovereignty, this chapter will describe Pannenberg's use of field theory as a field of temporality, wherein the Spirit creates the grounding of history as a manifestation of himself in the same manner as the dynamic field.

A key aspect for our understanding of freedom beyond mere contingency, which could just as easily be characterised as randomness, is the concept of purpose, which can be achieved via Pannenberg's modification of Teilhard and Polanyi to describe goal-oriented, contingent action. Pannenberg does this, in part, through an appeal to ecstasis as a creative response to the actions and being of God, as elucidated below.

However, in establishing the ecstatic response of life, there remains a danger in denying the distinction between Creator and created. This distinction is needed to maintain both the sovereignty of God and the freedom of humanity, since freedom would require that each human constitutes a distinct centre of volition. It seems that Pannenberg overcorrects by rejecting not only pantheism, but also panentheism. While it is important to reject pantheism and many forms of panentheism, Pannenberg fails to consider certain forms of panentheism that may actually buttress his theological vision, as creator and created choose to work toward a common goal, without being so unified that one is absorbed into the other. Indeed, in the discussion of panentheism at the end of this chapter, Pannenberg's narrow definition of panentheism, as a sort of 'naïve panentheism,' will be critiqued.

Once the ecstatic response of creation has been properly understood in Pannenberg's theology, we can then move to articulate the way that field theory functions within Pannenberg's theology of history. In the course of doing so, I will demonstrate the influence of Schelling upon Pannenberg, highlighted in chapter two, and place this in conjunction with the Stoic grounding for field described in the previous chapter. Given that the Stoics speak in the language of potentiality, it would be safe to conclude that, for the Stoics, the act of creation is one that takes place 'from the future,' in terms strikingly similar to those employed in chapter four. Further, given that the language of creation for the Stoics is one of potentiality moving into actuality, it would be wrong to characterise the Stoic idea of creation as the *pneuma* creating the material world and also the present. Rather, it should be argued that, by creating the present, or by actualising the potential future, the entirety of existence, including the material world, is made.

It will be argued that Pannenberg's theology is best understood as a theology of history, and the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom can be resolved, if the Spirit is understood to causally act as a temporal field. The key to this will be establishing, in this chapter, that, for Pannenberg, the Spirit upholds creation by continually releasing the grounding for historical events from the future into the present such that while the end of

history has already been observed, the length of time between the present and the actualisation of that end within history is undefined. It is only in this way that we can speak of the end of history arising out of the free actions of creatures, while also claiming that the end is entirely defined. The former is critical for establishing that human actions are free and meaningful, while the latter is critical for maintaining the sovereignty of God. To begin this discussion, we must start where the prior chapter ended. Given Pannenberg's connection of the Spirit with field, we must distinguish the manner in which we understand the Spirit to create as opposed to the other persons of the Trinity.

1 The Holy Spirit Working as Dynamic Field in Creation via Singularity

Although Pannenberg seeks 'to ground creation in the triune God,' as noted in the previous chapter, when discussing the activity of God within the cosmos, Pannenberg places primary emphasis on the role of the Spirit.⁸⁴⁵ The Father and Son also create, but 'the Son's...role in creation takes place in such a way that it is in the power of the Spirit that he [*the Son*] is the origin of the different creatures in their specific distinctiveness.'⁸⁴⁶ Since the Spirit is the unifying force within the Trinity and the person most readily present to us among the economic Trinity, what is said of the Spirit will inform our theology of the Triune God as a whole.

Pannenberg's approach to explaining the effective working of God within the physical universe is to explain the creative work of God through the application of 'field,' understood primarily as Spirit. Prior to examining the extent to which Pannenberg is successful in applying the field concept theologically, we must first understand how the Spirit broadly, in terms of field, functions in the world according to Pannenberg's theology. Once Pannenberg's application is examined and elaborated, its relation to our central questions of the tension between human freedom and divine

⁸⁴⁵ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 85.

⁸⁴⁶ ST2, 110.

sovereignty, and the impact of understanding Pannenberg's theology as one of history, will then be addressed.

According to Pannenberg, the Holy Spirit 'understood as field...functions as the principle of the immanence of God in creation.'⁸⁴⁷ In other words, the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity through the Spirit's role in creation, as the vicarious presence of the Father and the one by whom the Son acts, working as a dynamic field. The Holy Spirit, in this role, is necessarily creative and functions as the source of life for creation, an idea that has its roots in Teilhard.⁸⁴⁸ This concept of the Holy Spirit as the source of life is described by Teilhard as an extension of the spiritual energy characterised by love.⁸⁴⁹ Pannenberg, influenced by Teilhard, describes the Holy Spirit in terms of field, also characterised by love, who is the source of life, or Spirit of life, a concept that will also be explored in more detail in the next section.⁸⁵⁰

The concept of the Holy Spirit as the source of life is understood by Pannenberg via the Spirit's working as the primary, creative, dynamic field upon all existence.⁸⁵¹ To fully appreciate the depth of Pannenberg's application of field theory, we should elaborate upon his contention that creation occurs as the manifestation of field, which Pannenberg describes as occurring via 'singularities' arising from the dynamic field of Spirit.⁸⁵² We should first describe what is meant by 'singularity' in this context.

In physics, a singularity is an area of immense density, having a high mass and concentrated in relative little space, which is undefined to a certain extent.⁸⁵³ It is hypothesised that, at the beginning of the universe, either

⁸⁴⁷Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 215.

⁸⁴⁸ Pannenberg, *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, 23; Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 22; Pannenberg, *The Apostles Creed*, 133-134.

⁸⁴⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Phenomenon*, 264-270.

⁸⁵⁰ Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 22-23.

⁸⁵¹ ST2, 110.

⁸⁵² *TTN*, 64-67.

⁸⁵³ That is contingent.

multiple singularities or a single singularity functioned as a sort of pure potentiality for which, in relation to forces expressed as fields, the number of variable values in relation to other particles is infinite.⁸⁵⁴ In this way, multiple singularities, or a single singularity, as a concentration of the dynamic field, resulted in the present state of the physical universe by collapsing all possible outcomes to a more limited set, initiating the 'Big Bang.'⁸⁵⁵

Today, the use of the term 'singularity' within modern field theory has been adapted from mathematics. There, a singularity generally means a point or points at which, for a given equation or vector (directional value), the values are undefined or for which all values become undifferentiated. In modern field theory, the term 'singularity' is used to describe massive gravitational fields that come into and out of existence and can develop into any number of physical objects. The exact vector values for these fields, which determine how they will interact with space-time and thus what they will become, remain undefined until they have a particular interaction. The existence of these fields is measurable, but the way in which they will interact with space-time is not predictable in light of the undefined nature of their vector fields. While Einstein's physics equations theorised that singularities actually only occur at event horizons in black holes, field theory as it used outside of narrow relativity physics, does not necessitate that singularities only, or at least that they always only, occur in black holes.⁸⁵⁶ One might be tempted to reject field theory's use of singularities by noting that, despite having initially suggested their existence, Einstein himself rejected the idea that singularities exist at all, whether in black holes, or even that singularities, or a single singularity, functioned as a beginning point of the universe at the

⁸⁵⁴ Care should be taken to not construe this to mean that any possibility can occur, only that the number of possibilities, within certain parameters, is infinite.

⁸⁵⁵ J. W. Bruce and P. J. Giblin, *Curves and Singularities: A Geometrical Introduction to Singularity Theory*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 292-300.

⁸⁵⁶ Julius Robert Oppenheimer and Hartland Snyder, 'On Continued Gravitational Contradiction,' *Physical Review* 56 (1939): 455-59.

Big Bang.⁸⁵⁷ Despite this, both Einstein's equations as they have been developed within relativity physics, and the work of physicists working in other areas, have predicted and continue to predict the existence of these singularities throughout the universe.⁸⁵⁸

Pannenberg hypothesises that God's initial act of creation was via the Spirit, who manifested himself as singularities and functioned as the dynamic field, thus creating the world.⁸⁵⁹ Whether this is meant to be taken literally or metaphorically will be addressed below. For now, we should understand that, for Pannenberg, the Spirit of God is the creative force either as field or acting causally in the same manner as the dynamic field, though related to the physical universe in a unique manner. The introduction of the terminology of 'singularity,' which will become particularly important toward the end of the chapter, highlights the contingent nature of creation first explained in chapter one. By applying field to creation as a whole and not just the manifestation of physical objects, through the doctrine of *creatio continua*, Pannenberg also incorporates fields beyond physics into the discussion. Of particular importance, when speaking of life, such as human life, is the relation of field to biology, which, as noted in the previous chapter, was first examined by Polanyi. Polanyi, as has been established, sought to counter what he considered the mechanistic view of the development of life by proposing that life develops contingently. One result of Polanyi's application of field and singularities to biology is, among other things, the idea that life is, in Pannenberg's terms, 'ecstatic.' Pannenberg takes the idea of 'ecstasis' and the concept of 'ecstatic responses' to be the manner by which the Spirit, understood as field, gives life to creation, as will be elucidated below.

⁸⁵⁷ Albert Einstein, 'On a Stationary System with Spherical Symmetry Consisting of Many Gravitating Masses,' *Annals of Mathematics* 40 (1939): 922–36.

⁸⁵⁸ Bruce and Gilbin, *Curves and Singularities*, 292–300.

⁸⁵⁹ ST2, 80–85.

2 The Ecstatic Nature of Life

Pannenberg asserts that the Holy Spirit acts as Creator by working as the life-giving field for creation, noting that ‘in the Bible the divine Spirit is understood as the origin of all life.’⁸⁶⁰ Pannenberg makes his claim, in part, based upon the ‘old image of breath’ which he equates with Spirit ‘as being the creative origin of life’ to bring a new understanding to the particular act of the creation of humanity. When Pannenberg employs Teilhard’s radial energy, he does not accept Teilhard’s claim that the Omega Point constitutes the consummation of evolution in the glorified state of people.⁸⁶¹ Evolution, on its own, cannot be directed toward anything specific. It is a process that could just as likely lead to less complexity as it could to more complexity.

Instead, Pannenberg uses Teilhard’s writing to argue that by examining the history of the world through an evolutionary lens one can see the life-giving breath of God as the continuous active presence of the Spirit. For the Spirit to be ‘life-giving,’ Pannenberg argues that the evolutionary process must be guided toward a goal by the Spirit that necessarily includes a life-giving stage, but not in such a way as to compromise the contingent nature of the process.

Again drawing on the work of Polanyi, Pannenberg describes the Spirit as a biological field that arouses an ‘ecstatic’ response in creation.⁸⁶²

Pannenberg refers to the ecstatic response that the Spirit elicits in three different areas: in the church, found, for instance, in the presence of spiritual gifts; in redemption, by allowing the believer to participate in a life beyond himself/herself and commune with the ‘other’ who is God; and in creation by eliciting an ecstatic response in creatures that is essentially relational.⁸⁶³ Due

⁸⁶⁰ Pannenberg, *Spirit Faith and Church*, 14. See also, Pannenberg, *The Apostles Creed*, 133-134; 140-142.

⁸⁶¹ TTN, 132-134.

⁸⁶² IST, 44-45. See also Teilhard, *Phenomenon*, 257-260. The term ‘biological field’ is Polanyi’s, see *Personal Knowledge*, 190.

⁸⁶³ ST3, 131-135; 552.

to the focus on historical action and, in particular, the creation event, it is with this latter use that we presently concern ourselves.

For Pannenberg, all life is, to some measure, ecstatic. He means this in the simplest sense. All life must reach out beyond itself, such as from the environment, in order to survive and in so doing each creature brings about its own future.⁸⁶⁴ This 'ecstatic character of the self-transcendence of life,' is related to a future of which most animals are not necessarily aware. This is where Pannenberg draws the connection to Teilhard's 'radial energy.'⁸⁶⁵ Teilhard defines radial energy as the presence of the Spirit of God within every created thing that guides and pulls it toward the Omega Point.' The concept is important for its vision of a variety of independent causes moving toward a single goal, yet, as noted, Pannenberg argues that Teilhard's vision is too deterministic. Instead the 'radial energy' of Teilhard must be 'replaced...by the assumption of a field of energy.' This offers an explanation of the movement of history that it is 'more complex' than Teilhard's and allows for contingent action by allowing each creature to participate in 'an activity...beyond its limitations.' In so doing, the field of the Spirit is able to 'grant it [the creature] its life.'⁸⁶⁶ For Teilhard, the ecstatic response of life in creation refers to what is essentially a response of the human consciousness to the Spirit's continuous presence as a life-giving source, but for Pannenberg, the 'Spirit is not identical with mind, nor is it manifested primarily through mind' as in Teilhard.⁸⁶⁷ Pannenberg describes the development of a child growing independently of the mother as one of the most recognisable examples of a human ecstatic response.⁸⁶⁸ He qualifies his claim, though, by arguing that the ecstatic response is not 'first and

⁸⁶⁴ TTN, 134

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁶⁷ See Teilhard, *Phenomenon*, 258, where Teilhard describes evolution as 'an ecstatic response' resulting in 'an ascent towards consciousness' present to varying degrees in creatures; TTN, 136.

⁸⁶⁸ Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 346-350; cf. 224-228.

foremost...consciousness.'⁸⁶⁹ Rather, the ecstatic response is the act of participating in something beyond the self that transcends one's own finite existence. In this act the child recognises that there is an increasing level of distinction between himself and his mother and that the two are still in relation that allows for this distinction to be observed. While the child does not fully comprehend it, he has begun to observe the infinity of the other within his or her finiteness, though he or she may not recognise it as infinite.

Given that this recognition of the child is a psychological development, Pannenberg recognises that the ecstatic response in humans is related to consciousness, but 'only inasmuch as consciousness, and in particular charismatically intensified and ecstatic consciousness, is seen as an especially heightened form of life.' Only through this recognition might we describe this development as evidence of the fact that life is ecstatic. However, if we are to say that the child is participating in the infinite beyond his or her own finite experience, reasons Pannenberg, there must be some infinite force drawing the individual into such an experience. For Pannenberg, this drawing of the finite toward the infinite is ecstatic only insofar as it is 'the work of the Spirit.'⁸⁷⁰

If the intervention of the Spirit is required to produce a truly ecstatic response, reasons Pannenberg, then we can describe all life as ecstatic only to the extent to which it is spiritual. The animal that reaches beyond itself to bring about a future of which it is largely unconscious does so only through the leading of the Spirit. While all life is ecstatic, for Pannenberg, 'the ecstatic character found in all life reaches a new level of intensity, a new high point, in human beings.'⁸⁷¹ Pannenberg notes that this intensity is found because humans are unique in possessing 'a consciousness that bridges time,' thereby not only anticipating the future, but also dealing with the present to bring about a unique and previously unimagined future goal. In other words, the life-giving act of the Spirit, to the extent that it is ecstatic, 'grants a measure of

⁸⁶⁹ ATP, 522.

⁸⁷⁰ ATP, 522.

⁸⁷¹ ATP, 524.

freedom unique to humanity.⁸⁷² This freedom is present in Pannenberg's theology in a way that it is not for Teilhard due to the locus of the Spirit's operation. For Teilhard, the Spirit operates from within the centre of individual beings, driving them toward Omega. For Pannenberg, the Spirit operates from without the human centres of consciousness, enticing them, but not overwhelming them, toward the future of God, which is itself life. Only in the context of a future orientation is Pannenberg's use of 'ecstatic life' sensible.

While Pannenberg acknowledges that his connection of ecstasy to the future may resemble Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode* (Being-toward-death)⁸⁷³ he notes that 'contrary to what Heidegger says [*with respect to the anticipation of the future/one's hour of death*] ...this anticipation is not to be understood originally in the light of care.'⁸⁷⁴ Pannenberg, in an interview with Godfrey Onah, reiterates his position that ecstasy is more than anticipation of the future, when he notes that his anthropology is not merely one of anticipation.⁸⁷⁵ While anticipation and eschatology are important, it is the present experience of the 'prolepsis of the future,' and not only its anticipation, which is key. In doing so, Pannenberg shifts the discussion away from the future only and toward a theology of history as a whole, one that incorporates the present experience of the historical future.⁸⁷⁶ Pannenberg elaborates, that 'our Christian faith very much depends on the actual course of

⁸⁷² ATP, 524, 525.

⁸⁷³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 291 (German 247).

⁸⁷⁴ ATP, 525, citing Heidegger, *Being and Time* 372-378 (German, 325-329), and 525n.

⁸⁷⁵ Pannenberg's interpretation of Heidegger on this point is not without controversy. Heideggerians might contest Pannenberg's interpretation of *Sein-zum-Tode*. Indeed, many might argue that Heidegger's description of *Sein-zum-Tode* is fully present. That being said, the prolepsis of Pannenberg is clearly of a different nature given that it focuses on the ecstatic relationship of the individual to a more broadly universal and simultaneously supernatural relationship than Heidegger understands the concept.

⁸⁷⁶ Godfrey Igwebuike Onah, *Self-Transcendence and Human History in Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 209. Transcript of interview begins on page 208; As noted previously, it is, in particular, this theology of history as a 'whole' fully present now that sets Pannenberg's interpretation apart.

history, [and] on the actual arrival of the fullness of the kingdom of God.’⁸⁷⁷ It is not enough to be drawn toward the not-yet-existent future, or to anticipate a future that is yet to come. In order for the Spirit to elicit an ecstatic response in humanity, we must be confronted with the ‘actual arrival’ of the end of history as the future that appeared, proleptically, at the resurrection of Jesus, as discussed in chapter four.

In light of the inclusion of the proleptic appearance of the end of history, Pannenberg argues that ‘ecstatic self-transcendence’ is characterised not only by hope, but also by trust. Hope is understood with respect to the anticipation of the future end of history. Trust is necessary because of the proleptic arrival of that end in the Christ event—we trust in Christ and that in his resurrection as historical fact the end is already determined and has been revealed. Given that the future orientation is also tied to the past occurrence of that future, for Pannenberg, ‘history is the *principium individuationis*’ that is vital for an ecstatic response. The ecstatic response, as will be described below, not only draws the individual outside of herself/himself, but also allows the individual to recognise the distinction of himself/herself from the ‘other’ toward which she/he is drawn. In this way, the ecstatic response also grants identity as an individual, a necessary component for freedom, as argued in chapter four.⁸⁷⁸ Pannenberg claims, then, that the ecstatic response is tied to history as a whole, and not the future alone, since it ties together our present experience of the past revelation of the future end of history. It is true that ‘human beings grasp the meaning of their lives,’ from the end or goal of history, but that goal must be integrated into a present identity, ‘for the human being as historical being is not only the goal but also the movement of the history that leads to the goal.’⁸⁷⁹

The ecstatic response of humanity is tied to history in at least two distinct ways. First, humanity is the product of historical occurrence, thus we

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid., 211.

⁸⁷⁸ ATP, 526, 527.

⁸⁷⁹ ATP, 527.

might say that God creates humanity by creating history.⁸⁸⁰ Second, humanity only comprehends anything as real insofar as it is historical.⁸⁸¹ If these are both true, then God can only reveal himself *to* humanity if his revelation is also, itself, history, and to the extent that it is history it amounts to his self-revelation. One way in which the Spirit begins to elicit an ecstatic response is through his self-revelation from the end of history. The locus of this revelation from the end of history is key, for ‘this movement [*of history*]...derives its unity from the future by which it will be completed.’⁸⁸² Thus one cannot examine this or that moment of history in isolation, but must examine each event of history in relation to its unity which ‘has emanated from the God of the Bible and his revelation in Jesus Christ.’⁸⁸³ Humanity’s ability to perceive history, that is the connection of the future with present and past, what Pannenberg labels the ‘time-bridging present’ is what ‘makes possible the independence which characterizes human beings as subjects of responsible actions.’⁸⁸⁴ They are individuals in that they each individually experience and interpret history in a distinctive fashion. They are morally responsible in their individuality, first, and in their ability to perceive the connection of present actions to future outcomes. Again, as elucidated in chapter four, the individuality of humanity is necessary for freedom. However, the moral responsibility that is implied by the ‘time-bridging present’ experience of humanity implies human freedom as well.

The ecstatic character of humanity is not only understood in its relation to God, but seeks to relate to all creatures as an individual ‘other,’ distinct from the self, as well.⁸⁸⁵ In this way, ecstatic life is the differentiation of an ‘I’

⁸⁸⁰ WIM, 141-143.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., 143-145; of course this would entail a particular view of mathematics that Pannenberg does not seem to consider, but could be interpreted to be congruent with a variety of theories in philosophy of mathematics.

⁸⁸² ATP, 527.

⁸⁸³ WIM, 146-147.

⁸⁸⁴ ATP, 528.

⁸⁸⁵ ST2, 196

from a 'Thou' in the development of human conscious existence, and as such is also relational.⁸⁸⁶ It is ecstatic because the 'I' recognises the relationship of him/herself to the 'Thou' as an 'I' entering the relationship while still standing outside of, or independent of, the 'Thou': 'As an individual the human I is always distinct from its relation to any specific human person.'⁸⁸⁷ For Pannenberg, it is characteristic of the human experience to be 'present to the other as other.'⁸⁸⁸ In order for the I-Thou relationship to truly be the connection between two parties, and not a pantheistic relation of God or some other entity within itself, the 'I' must exist as distinct from the 'Thou' and the 'Thou' as distinct from the 'I.'⁸⁸⁹ This distinction of the 'I' from a 'Thou' is necessary for individual human freedom, as discussed in chapter four. Yet, it is here that we find the distinction of 'I' and 'Thou' is connected to an 'ecstatic' response to the work of the Spirit. Thus the distinction must be maintained not only between other persons, but also between each individual and God.

According to Buller's comments on Pannenberg, for humanity the ecstatic response of a human person also involves taking the world into one's self.⁸⁹⁰ This response is a further development of the conscious self as the 'I' understands itself as part of the universe, which is taken into the conscious existence of the 'I.'⁸⁹¹ In this way, by taking the universe into the self, the ecstatic response is relational and spiritual, because the taking of an infinite universe into a finite self is only possible by the Spirit, acting as an infinite dynamic field present to the finite. It is in this relation to the infinite that the

⁸⁸⁶ ST1, 111-112; 428-430.

⁸⁸⁷ ST1, 431.

⁸⁸⁸ ATP, 525.

⁸⁸⁹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Scribners, 1970); with respect to the discussion here see esp. pages 54-57.

⁸⁹⁰ Cornelius A. Buller, *The Unity of Nature and History in Pannenberg's Theology* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996) 171,

⁸⁹¹ ATP, 220-224.

ecstatic response of life has its origin, since the ecstatic response requires relationship beyond the individual's finite existence.⁸⁹²

For Pannenberg, this ecstatic response of creation reaches its climax at the end of history through the redemption of the world; for only then is the relationship between finite humanity and infinite God fully consummated.⁸⁹³ By being the source of life, through acting as a dynamic field, the Spirit has not only elicited an ecstatic response in creation, but is life itself. The independent and dependent tension present in creation is maintained, and indeed has been extended between all creatures. Although creation may have an independent ecstatic life, ultimately its life is grounded in the Spirit as life itself, and life in a concrete, non-metaphorical way, since it concerns the physical world and genuine cosmic history.⁸⁹⁴ The ecstatic experience with the 'other' is one mediated through and guided by God as Spirit, since the Spirit is infinite in his very being.

Another way to understand the force of this claim, that life is ecstatic, is to think of the Spirit not as imparting life to an individual creature that exists independently of the Spirit, but rather as the very life of creatures by virtue of their existence as manifestations of the dynamic field of Spirit. Functioning as 'this energy field' the Holy Spirit 'thus produces the existence of individuals'—not merely their awareness of an independent life, but their existence as an 'I' distinct from, yet tied to, all other objects and persons in creation.⁸⁹⁵

If the Spirit is life itself, then it implies that 'every form of life, especially the human being, shares in the divine spirit,' and does so in an active way, even if unaware. However, Pannenberg is quick to note that this participation is not a complete participation.⁸⁹⁶ Whereas Christ, in his human

⁸⁹² ATP, 525-530.

⁸⁹³ Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 178-181; cf. Buller, *Unity of Nature*, 80.

⁸⁹⁴ Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 33.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁹⁶ ST1, 131-135.

self, displayed a complete participation in the life of the Spirit, proven by his resurrection, the rest of humanity does not participate as fully in the life of the Spirit until the new life is made fully manifest at the *eschaton*.⁸⁹⁷ Then the Spirit will be understood fully to be the Spirit of life when ‘the Spirit totally permeates the new human being.’⁸⁹⁸

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which this ecstatic ‘life is present for us, as for other creatures, as we sense it in its indefinite totality.’⁸⁹⁹ Given the ties of our ecstatic response to history as an ‘indefinite totality,’ we should recall that while our experience of the past and future is fragmentary, and thus incomplete, it is experienced as a totality, with duration, for God in simultaneity. Eternity, for Pannenberg, is not ‘timelessness,’ but is rather the unity of all time, as history, in God. Given that freedom requires an ecstatic relation, which leads to individuation to the extent that it is historical, and that this ecstatic relation is consummated only at the *eschaton*, but present proleptically to us now, we must elaborate on the manner in which God can elicit this response, while also remaining distinct from creatures. For, if God’s ecstatic relation is also tied to his act in creation such that, as has been noted numerous times, Pannenberg claims that God ‘makes himself dependent’ upon creation, we must, give an account of the manner in which God remains distinct from creation. God not only relates to us by taking us into himself, but also ecstatically by admitting the distinction between us.

3 Creator and Creature in Relation

3.1 The distinction between creator and creature

If humans find their identity primarily in their relation to God, or as ‘singularities’ of the dynamic field of the spirit, then humans are ‘made in the image of God’ in that they are a particularly unique manifestation of the dynamic field of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰⁰ Of course, this anthropology would seem

⁸⁹⁷ Pannenberg, *The Apostles’ Creed*, 136-142.

⁸⁹⁸ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 99.

⁸⁹⁹ ST3, 597.

⁹⁰⁰ Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 85.

to suggest a doctrine of God that is panentheistic, yet Pannenberg is adamant that this is not the case.⁹⁰¹ Given the ties between the doctrine of God advanced by a theology of history and Pannenberg's theological anthropology, it will be helpful to examine the extent to which Pannenberg's denial regarding panentheism may be taken as consistent with the rest of his theology.

A major factor in Pannenberg's hesitancy to admit to panentheism may be his relation to process theologians. Pannenberg has consistently and intentionally distanced himself from process theologians.⁹⁰² Considering that Pannenberg was one of the first non-American theologians to engage seriously with process theology, there may be good reason for Pannenberg to make such a distinction clear.

Process theology is a theology of becoming and, as such, does not recognize a defined end. Instead of a *telos* at the end of history, all temporal occurrences have within them the complete *telos* of God connected to each other event by this single, non-temporally located, *telos* that acts as a goal and gives meaning to all events, but without particular regard for any temporal end toward which they strive. In other words, Gadamer's critique of Dilthey as being 'teleological without a telos,' mentioned in chapter three, is embraced by the Process theologian. This contradicts Pannenberg's idea of a defined temporal end accessible proleptically through the resurrection. Further, within process theology, because all events directly connect to all other events in their fullness, efficient causation as 'external' is untenable since efficient causation, for the process theologian, entails the 'entering into' of one event by another. In other words, causation, including efficient causation, is

⁹⁰¹ IST, 45-46.

⁹⁰² See, for instance, Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'A Liberal Logos Christology: The Christology of John Cobb,' in *John Cobb's Theology in Process*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Thomas JJ Altizer (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 133-149; and Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Atom, Duration, Form: Difficulties with Process Philosophy,' trans. John C. Robertson, Jr and Gerard Vallee, *Process Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 21, 25.

necessarily internal, even if it includes external elements.⁹⁰³ Requiring that all causation is necessarily internal is incredibly problematic for Pannenberg, who cannot engage in thoughtful dialogue with physics if he applies such a notion to material object interaction. These ideas of entering into one another and temporal interconnectivity on such level result from the panentheism of Whitehead and Hartshorne, and no scholar now seriously considers Pannenberg to be in any way a process theologian.⁹⁰⁴

Despite Pannenberg's objections and his distance from process theology, good reasons for maintaining that Pannenberg's theology is panentheistic persist, though perhaps not in the way that Pannenberg's critics allege.⁹⁰⁵ A more fundamental issue would be to ascertain if panentheism of the sort to which Pannenberg may ascribe, regardless of whether he labels it as such, is in fact something that should be avoided, or even can be avoided, given Pannenberg's other theological commitments, particularly with respect to the relation between humans, history and the Spirit acting as field. We may affirm, with Pannenberg, that his theology rejects what might be termed 'naïve panentheism.' On such a view, God is not identical with the material/visible world, as in pantheism, but the world is, nevertheless, fully the manifestation of God. It merely remains that God is *more than* the world on such a view.⁹⁰⁶

By contrast, the definition of panentheism offered by Philip Clayton seems particularly promising given Pannenberg's view of history as the divine

⁹⁰³ John B Cobb, Jr and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 1976), 23. John Cobb is the leading figure in process theology which is the application of Whitehead and Hartshorne's process philosophy within theology.

⁹⁰⁴ John B. Cobb, Jr., 'Pannenberg and Process Theology,' in *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 54-74.

⁹⁰⁵ See, for instance, John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The other God of the Philosophers—From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 281; Roger Eugene Olson, 'Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,' Thesis, Rice University, 1984, 327-353. Both criticise Pannenberg's theology as panentheistic, but present a description of panentheism that is far too narrow.

⁹⁰⁶ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 13. Although Cooper does not label this 'naïve panentheism,' given the nuance of other authors, this seems more than appropriate.

action of God within which humans operate, and his creation of the world as singularities of himself. According to Clayton, panentheism should be understood ‘to stress that the infinite God is ontologically *as close to finite things as can possibly be thought without dissolving the distinction of Creator and created altogether.*’⁹⁰⁷ In this way, biblical statements about God relating to creation as a distinct entity are not discarded. Rather, this form of panentheism provides a framework for understanding those statements in a different way, namely as a God who chooses to be infinitely close to Creation without overwhelming the existence of creation.

Despite his language of the singularity, Pannenberg maintains that God is Spirit who is present to creation and is actively operating in the historical occurrences of history, while still being ontologically distinct from creation.⁹⁰⁸ In his comments on this point, found in the introductory book to his systematic theology, Pannenberg’s assertion is virtually indistinguishable from Clayton’s description of panentheism. What remains to be seen, however, is whether Pannenberg can simultaneously claim that God as Spirit is distinct from his creation while nevertheless creating in the manner described above as a singularity.

Perhaps we may say that panentheism is another way of describing the relation between the immanent and economic Trinity wherein the economic Trinity manifests itself to and in creation, simultaneously drawing that same creation into itself as the immanent Trinity, while also allowing that same creation to remain distinct and independent. In this form of panentheism, while we might say that the Creator is ‘more’ than the ‘totality’ of all creation, we must simultaneously declare that in a qualified, but very real and important sense, the totality of all creation is more than, which is to say ontologically distinct from, its Creator. As noted above, this distinction is grounded in the ecstatic nature of life and of the divine identity of the Trinity.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁷ Philip Clayton, ‘The Panentheistic Turn in Christian Theology,’ *Dialog* 38, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 289. Italics original.

⁹⁰⁸ IST, 46.

⁹⁰⁹ Also ST2, 196.

I do not mean to argue, however, that Pannenberg is a ‘classical theist.’ Beyond his reluctant, but qualified, panentheism, certain aspects of classical theism, specifically divine aseity, and with it impassibility and immutability are abandoned. It is clear that, for Pannenberg, the ascension of the resurrected Christ *as a human*, is incompatible with immutability; in at least one important sense, God did change. While one may read Chalcedon to mean that Christ has, from eternity understood atemporally, always had the human nature that does not mix or intermingle with his divine nature, such a tack still requires that the contingency of the incarnation be maintained.⁹¹⁰ This may preserve immutability if Leibnizian contingency is in view, but a Scotist contingency, as noted in chapter one, requires a temporal element. The Scotist view, built as it is on the Aristotelian one, requires that for contingent action to occur, a change must occur. Since it cannot be the case that Christ become a human as an ontological necessity, which would imply either a dependence or a lack in the nature of Christ, the action of incarnation must be considered contingent. Further, for Pannenberg’s theology, the very concept of atemporality is a false one. The openness of the future rejects atemporal existence as a possibility.

With respect to aseity specifically, Pannenberg unambiguously abandons it. It is true that God, in his essential nature, has no need for anyone or anything and is, therefore, inherently without dependence. Yet, for Pannenberg, by choosing to create and making space for the free actions of his creation, God ‘makes himself dependent,’ upon the course of that history within which he is one of many participants.

To be clear, these aspects of classical theism are not rejected because God lacks these aspects by nature. Rather, in Pannenberg’s view, God voluntarily abandons aseity. God, by his nature, does not require anyone and, as concerns his character, he does not change, but God sacrifices his aseity and immutability to make himself dependent upon the flow of history via creation and incarnation. In many ways, this is nature of love itself. As a partner may

⁹¹⁰ See, for instance, John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God in A Theology of Lordship* vol. 2, (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 563-574. Many attempts to reconcile the nature of incarnation with divine immutability make at least a partial appeal to eternity as atemporality.

abandon certain aspects of his or her self for the sake of a spouse, so too does God give of himself for the sake of his creation. The core character of God remains as love, and indeed it is precisely because this is the core of God that such a change might be expected.

There are two other traditional positions, outside the doctrine of God that Pannenberg rejects. First, Pannenberg rejects the Virgin birth.⁹¹¹ He does so, in large part, in order to reject the Mariology he saw as pervasive in Roman Catholic theology. As it does not affect any other part of his theology, we may note that such a discussion as to its validity is beyond the scope of this thesis. The second is the doctrine of Original Guilt as inherited, according to the Augustinian understanding. Pannenberg's reasons are that if Jesus is understood to be both fully human and fully divine, the human nature cannot have inherited sin as part of the structure of humanity.⁹¹² Pannenberg still maintains that all humans other than Jesus do, in fact, sin, and, as a result, his position here effectively does not impact any other aspect of his theology.

Despite this divergences from classical theology, it is not the case that Pannenberg entirely abandons classical theism either. Many aspects of classical theism, such as omnipotence, personhood, the pre-existent Christ,⁹¹³ the idea of God as fully 'other,' and a robust Trinitarian theology, are clearly maintained by Pannenberg, and have been discussed in various parts of this thesis. In particular, it is Pannenberg's insistence on maintaining the sovereignty of God, despite his claim that God 'has made himself dependent' on the unfolding of history that has been the central conflict driving this thesis. This desire to maintain divine sovereignty without impeding human freedom is why the definition of Panentheism, within which we understand Pannenberg's theology to be placed, must maintain a creator/creation

⁹¹¹ *JGM*, 141-150.

⁹¹² *JGM*, 362.

⁹¹³ As discussed in chapter three, Pannenberg's approach is non-standard (from below), but his position with respect to Christian theology affirms that Jesus did not 'become Christ,' but was merely 'revealed to have been Christ' all along at the resurrection.

distinction. Without such a distinction, not only do we risk forgoing the freedom of humanity, but the sovereignty of God is made less tenable.

Therefore, this distinction between God and creation must be maintained, even in light of the reinterpretation of history as divine actions within which we participate, first outlined in chapter three. The actions of creatures occur upon the grounding action of God, given that his action within creation never ceases when the concept of *creatio continua* is rightly understood, as described in the first and second chapters. Nevertheless, certain problems with the interplay between creator and creature remain, which will require a further engagement with the Stoics and with Schelling in order to approach a resolution.

3.2 The creator-creature tension in contingency

The freedom of creatures, coupled with the power of God to create, has within it an inherent tension. In large part this is because not only is there creaturely contingency, but God maintains his contingent nature, even while making himself dependent upon creation. As discussed above, the second implication of viewing creation as a singularity of the dynamic field of the Holy Spirit is that ‘the creative dynamic of the Spirit also has an element of indeterminacy.’⁹¹⁴ It is important to note the independence of both God and humanity for this is a necessary precondition of freedom. It is not enough to merely be contingent; there must be purpose in addition to contingency. While we discussed the purpose of God as the climatic end of history toward which he is guiding creation in chapter four, we must not forget that individual humans must act with particular purpose as well. In order for this purpose to be unified, which it must be to some extent if we are to speak of the end of history as arising out of the contingent actions of both humanity and God, we find that God and humanity enter into a dependence on each other. Yet, as has already been noted, this dependence must be held in tension with each person’s independence as well. Rather than a problem to explain away, though, this independent-dependent tension, first described in chapter one,

⁹¹⁴ ST2, 110.

should be viewed as the key feature of creation. It is foundational for the occurrence of history that entails human freedom and divine sovereignty, not a challenge to it.

As noted in the first two chapters, the creation of the world is a contingent act resulting in a contingent creation, which means that the ‘distinctive form that comes forth from’ creation is largely undefined until ‘it takes concrete shape in the creature.’⁹¹⁵ It is ‘the Spirit’s dynamic’ as a field that grants creation an independent existence.⁹¹⁶ Thus, despite creaturely dependence upon God, as unique creaturely manifestations of the dynamic creative field, the indeterminate nature of the act of creation suggests that creation produces autonomous creatures who are also independent of God, resulting in the same tension between dependence and independence of creation addressed in earlier chapters.⁹¹⁷

Pannenberg suggests that this tension is evident in creation’s participation in the life of God, seen through the Spirit’s participation in creation. Pannenberg notes that the ‘Orthodox East’ gives us the best example of maintaining ‘a continuous awareness of the fundamental meaning of the participation of the Spirit in the act of creation.’ This meaning is ‘the basis of the implications of his [the Holy Spirit’s] salvific presence in the Church and in Christian experience.’⁹¹⁸

It is important to recall from chapter one that the dependent-independent tension is a necessary aspect of creation; without this tension, one cannot speak of an independent God making free creatures. Taken in light of the discussion in chapter one, then, given that Pannenberg is utilising field theory and that we are grounding his use of it in the Stoic concept of *pneuma*, the *tonos* of creation is critical for understanding this aspect of *creatio continua*. Created things come into existence through the will of God. In order

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ See chapters one and two.

⁹¹⁸ Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, 23.

for these things to be contingent, they must exist independently of God. Nevertheless, if we are to take Pannenberg's statements regarding singularities seriously, in a very important sense this independent existence is only possible because, in *creatio ex nihilo*, God creates from his own being. We might state that creation occurs *ex nihilo* in the sense that it is not created out of any other physical object. In a limited, but very real sense, God's manifestation of himself into his own history creates the conditions necessary within which the physical universe may come forth. Thus the created object is simultaneously dependent upon God for its very existence, while also being independent of God as it is contingent.

It is in this way that we must understand the Stoic *tonos pneumatikos*; the tension of creation is not only the result of creation, it *is* the act of creation in this broader sense. God creates the universe from the tension between his own sovereign independence and humanity's free and independent existence. While the Stoics, as will be examined below, may have understood this in physical terms, we may amplify and extend Pannenberg's argument to suggest that this occurs in temporal terms. God's history, then, becomes our history while still remaining his own history. There becomes an interpenetration between human temporal action and divine temporal interaction such that each acts independently, but we enter into God's history and, by the act of creating, God simultaneously creates the landscape of what will shape into our history. We can describe our actions as independent in that we bring about our own purposes, but these purposes are part of a larger history as well toward which God is guiding his own free actions within time. Through the submission of himself as dependent upon our actions and through our own dependence upon his actions, we create a divine-human history out of the tension between each of our beings.

Further, this confirms our assertion from the first chapter that *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua* are not separate events, but different descriptions of the same sustained event. The tension between dependence and independence of creatures is exemplified in the relation of the Spirit, as life-giving field, to creation, since it is primarily through the Spirit that God

creates. This role of the Spirit as life-giving field, is vital for understanding the nature of God, and God's actions, in relation to history and humanity. The tension between God as sovereign creator and humanity as still independent, is an exemplification of a core question of this thesis: how can God be sovereign and humanity be free? This tension between creator and created is fundamental for addressing this question, because the tension of creation is indistinguishable from the issue of divine sovereignty and human freedom, and is tied together with Pannenberg's own theology of history. To examine the exact manner in which the tension of history leads to the creation, both initial and continuous, of a free humanity by a sovereign God, we should first examine the way in which the Stoics, whose philosophy is foundational for Pannenberg's depiction of field, understood creative tension before amplifying that use specifically through the historical philosophy of Schelling.

4 Revisiting the philosophical background of Field

4.1 The Stoics and Pannenberg

Throughout the last chapter and this one it has been argued that Pannenberg's application of field was the fundamental manner by which he understood divine action. However, beginning with the paper 'Geist als Feld,' it became clear that Pannenberg's focus should be understood not only in terms of the modern use of field in physics, but also in light of the 'Stoic *pneuma*-doctrine,' which, according to Jammer, Berkson, and others, provided the philosophical foundation for field theory.⁹¹⁹ Thus any reaffirmation of field theory will need to examine Pannenberg's use of the concept through the medium of the Stoics. What is of critical importance for our purposes, though, is the way in which the Stoic depiction of the creation and sustaining of the universe by the *pneuma* informs Pannenberg's theology of history, especially as it relates to the issue of divine sovereignty and human freedom *vis a vis* the creative action of the Spirit via field.

⁹¹⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Geist als Feld—nur Eine Metapher?' *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie*, Vol II: *Natur und Mensch—und die Zukunft der Schöpfung* (1996; repr., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000) 67-68.

One might argue that due to the material aspect of the Stoic *pneuma*, it could not be the foundation of the philosophical claims concerning field for Pannenberg. However, in the last chapter, I noted that many scholars of Stoicism have tried to demonstrate that the Stoics never truly regarded *pneuma* as in any way material. If the *pneuma* is not to be regarded as material, then, as suggested in the last chapter, the objections of the early Church Fathers leading to the philosophical dominance of the *nous* over *pneuma*, while still using the term '*pneuma*' as it was utilised in the New Testament, is invalid.

As noted above, the manner of creation would fall in line with the Stoic *tonos*. This creative tension also means that the Spirit is present to all of creation as its life, ultimately embracing the whole of creation at the eschatological redemption. Surprisingly, although much scholarship has addressed Pannenberg's use of field theory, it appears that no one has seriously engaged Pannenberg's move back to the Stoic *pneuma*, modified through field theory. Given the close parallel between the Stoic *tonos* and Pannenberg's description of creation occurring in light of an inherent tension, it is entirely reasonable to consider that Pannenberg is substantively reflecting the Stoic description of creation rather than merely using Stoicism as a stepping stone to talk about field theory. For our purposes, this relates directly to the tension between free humans and sovereign Spirit.

This may be complicated somewhat, however, when one recalls that Schelling also described creation as resulting from a creative tension between the nature of God and the nature of independent and free creatures.⁹²⁰ Creation, for Schelling, is the direct result of a tension within God and between the absolute sovereignty of God and the radical contingency of creation.⁹²¹ It should be noted, though, that Schelling was well informed of the Stoics, and we should also recall that Schelling's *Spätphilosophie*, with which this thesis is primarily concerned, understands that tension in the light of history.

⁹²⁰ Ch. 2.

⁹²¹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Stämmliche Werke*, II:4, 371, 375-380.

Schelling encountered Stoic philosophy, among other places, through his reading of Hegel. Following the split between the two, Schelling believed that many of Hegel's writings were a polemic against him personally, and so read Hegel's work, which frequently referenced the Stoics, very carefully.⁹²² Schelling also noticed certain Stoic themes in the writing of Spinoza, whom he regarded to have become a sort of stoic 'physicist' or 'metaphysician.'⁹²³ In response to this, Schelling tries to find a middle ground between the 'stoic-metaphysician-physicist' seen in Spinoza and the Fichtean 'Epicurean-metaphysician-physicist.'⁹²⁴ Specifically, Schelling attempted to find a way to enliven or make the Stoic description of action substantially more dynamic. While the terminology of 'physicist' as used by Schelling is likely in its philosophical sense, and not a reference to its contemporary scientific use, the term should not be overlooked. As noted in chapter two, Schelling argued for a positive 'philosophy of science' as a potential method for detailing the action of history in relation to God.

It is therefore not insignificant that Pannenberg, whom I have demonstrated was deeply influenced by Schelling, took up the call to complete Schelling's depiction of history through the implementation of field. Given Schelling's position with respect to Stoicism, we should take the Stoic position all the more seriously. Even if we cannot draw a strong link between Schelling and Stoicism, the tension which is necessary for the creation of the world, of which Schelling frequently speaks, is sufficient reason to re-examine the *tonos* of Stoic creation.

As noted in the last chapter, the Stoic concept of *tonos* found its clearest expression, available to us today, in the writing of Chrysippus, whose work is extant only in fragments. Nevertheless, from these fragments we may piece together a few key elements. First, Chrysippus extended the concept of tension beyond that proposed earlier by Zeno, the latter of whom, by all

⁹²² Jason M. Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations of Schelling and His Time* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2003), 253n.

⁹²³ Ibid., 144.

⁹²⁴ Ibid., 145.

accounts, only advocated for an internal tension within human persons.⁹²⁵ Chrysippus's extension suggests a 'tensional connection' between every aspect of the universe, connecting heaven and earth and bringing about, ultimately and paradoxically, a unity within the tension.⁹²⁶

Even though we have explored the likelihood that most Stoics considered the *pneuma* to be immaterial, for Chrysippus, at least, it is important to note that much of the universe *is* a corporeal expression of *pneuma* in some way or another, including events and actions.⁹²⁷ Yet, corporeal is taken in much broader terms than one might assume today. Something is corporeal, for Chrysippus, if it either is available to direct sensory experience, or if it affects objects that are available to direct sensory experience. In this way, for Chrysippus and other Stoics who follow him, such as Marcus Aurelius, would argue that abstract concepts, such as Justice and Truth, as well as God are all corporeal, though not necessarily physical.⁹²⁸ It is only in this way, via a shared corporeality, that Chrysippus may argue for a unity within the *tonos*.

The corporeality of the Spirit, then, must be taken in this much broader, and not narrowly physical sense. In particular, Pannenberg explicitly incorporates the Stoic *tonos* into his overall anthropology to give a more detailed description of the 'ecstatic' response of humanity. Pannenberg takes the identification in Stoicism of the *syneidesis* with *hegemonikon* to mean that *syneidesis* is not the moral conscience narrowly, but a general self-awareness marked by *tonos*.⁹²⁹ Therefore, the ecstatic nature of life is taken to be the creation of human will and mind, which in the Stoicism of Chrysippus are necessarily free, despite being the incorporation of the *logos* into the self. If

⁹²⁵ Lapige 'Stoic Cosmology,' 173.

⁹²⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁹²⁷ Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 94.

⁹²⁸ Ibid., 95.

⁹²⁹ ST1, 111; note that while *syneidesis* is frequently synonymous with conscience, it is not only used in this manner, even in the New Testament (see Hebrews 10:2; 1 Peter 2:19).

we understand, then, the ‘corporeality’ of which the Stoics speak to be a reference to the non-material aspects of history—that is, ‘time’—then we may compose a scheme in which the universe, and specifically humanity, might be understood as free, yet as the product of the corporeality of the *logos*. Following the Stoicism of Chrysippus, and amplified through our understanding of Pannenberg, we may say that time itself, and with it history, is the corporeality of the *logos*.

This incorporation of the *logos* is marked by an inherent tension between the freedom of the *logos* and the potential freedom of the human will, itself an ecstatic response to the act of incorporation by the *logos*. Thus, the *logos*, creating history as a manifestation of himself, elicits an ecstatic response to history by human will that is characteristic of the tension between *logos* and human will that is a necessary part of the creation of the *logos* as *syneidesis*. Given that the *logos* is structured and purposed, it is easy to see the parallel between the Stoic *pneuma* as *logos* and the tension inherent in Pannenberg’s idea of history moving toward a defined goal, as the corporeality of creation is understood in historical terms, as described in the final sections of this chapter. Yet we must be careful to not too closely identify Pannenberg with the Stoics, of whom we know relatively little. Instead, we should examine this idea of tension and creative corporeality as it pertains to Schelling’s philosophy.

4.2 Schelling and Pannenberg in Light of the Stoics

For the Stoics, in contrast to Plato, the world we interact with is the real world and the only world that matters, not some other worldly concept of ideas or ‘Forms.’ While the Stoics admit the non-material nature of ideas, they claim ideas are grounded and connect to the physical world, via a medium. Thus Plato is not rejected *in toto*, only modified. Connected to this concept of ‘corporeality’ are Schelling’s statements in the *Freedom Essay* and the *Ages of the World*, that because God serves as his own grounding, God is

‘corporeal.’⁹³⁰ Schelling’s method of understanding the history of the world is connected not only to the Stoic concept of *tonos*, but also includes the Stoic sense of ‘corporeal.’ Yet this corporeality, as mentioned, should not be understood to be physical, but historical or temporal.

In the *Ages of the World*, Schelling begins to work out a philosophy of history. Schelling suggests that the past, present and future, the ages of the world, are all concurrent creations of God. While Schelling only deals directly with the past in *Ages of the World*, he argues that God has created the past from eternity as an eternal past.⁹³¹ It is perhaps in this way that we can understand the source of the ‘temporal thickness’ that Robert John Russell notes is integral to Pannenberg’s description of eternity, wherein events retain their temporal relation to each other (e.g., I was born after my father, but before my son), while still being perceived as unfragmented.⁹³² Indeed, Pannenberg’s discussion of eternity at the end of his systematic theology is telling. While our experience of past, present and future is fragmentary, in eternity, it is experienced as a totality with duration and simultaneity for God.⁹³³

It is here that our adaptation of panentheism, above, becomes particularly relevant. We must, of course, maintain that humanity and God are distinct if we are to speak of the former being free and the latter being sovereign. Yet the two are also connected, via the tension described in the two prior sections, in such a way that they interpenetrate each other, while still remaining distinct. God is his history, which is to say God is all of time because God has chosen to manifest himself, through his spirit, as history. Yet humanity is also historical in the sense that we commit acts of volition within time. Still, there is a very real sense in which our history is not always

⁹³⁰ This is in contradiction to Alister Welchman and Judith Norman, ‘Creating the Past: Schelling’s *Ages of the World*,’ in *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 4 (2010): 27, 29 (full text 23-43).

⁹³¹ See *Ibid.*, 23, 30-32.

⁹³² See pp.3-4 and chapter 4.

⁹³³ ST3, 598.

identical with the history of God, after all, we do sin, which, at least according to orthodoxy, requires that these not be the actions of God's history. However, by creating us as part of his history, God has brought us into that same history. Again, there is a distinct tension, one that is only resolved via the incarnation. It is not that God exists outside of time only, but by becoming a human person, God has taken all of history unto himself. As Pannenberg interprets the historical impact of the incarnation, 'Jesus Christ' becomes 'the centre of time.'⁹³⁴ Understood in light of his view of the eschatological nature of the resurrection, Pannenberg declares that 'The eschatological event of the appearance of Christ is the summation of the universe...[for] only from the perspective of the Christ event as eschatological event is human history to be understood as a unity,' with all of history, which is divine.⁹³⁵ While Schelling does not make the explicit connection between the whole of history with God and the Christ event, though he does refer to it as the 'climax of history' as discussed in the second chapter, the connection of God to time is explicitly stated by Schelling.

God is not outside of time, for Schelling, but inextricably tied to our history of his own volition, releasing himself fully from its bounds only at the eschatological consummation of history. It is from this that we might amplify Pannenberg's theology of history, informed as it is by Schelling's *Spätphilosophie*, in order to provide clarity to his theology, explain his use of 'field' more fully than he does, and relate his theology of history to the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. At the incarnation, God takes on our history, so that at the cross our history is made one with the history of God, and at the resurrection he affirms that the histories of each share in a common end. This, then, gives Gregory of Nazianzus's dictum a new interpretation.⁹³⁶

⁹³⁴ JGM, 380.

⁹³⁵ Ibid., 388.

⁹³⁶ 'That which is not assumed is not healed' from his 101 Epistle, also known as the 'Critique of Apollinarius and Apollinarianism,' p.d.

So Pannenberg's statement, that in creation 'God has made himself dependent upon the world,' can be clarified by stating that God has made himself dependent by creating history as a manifestation of himself. Yet, as discussed in chapter four, history must be understood in light of the proleptic appearance of the *eschaton*. To grasp the meaning of revelation, then, one must be able to relate this future unity of history to the present experience of history. Again viewing Pannenberg in light of Schelling's work will prove instructive.

In *Philosophie der Kunst*, an earlier work by Schelling, he notes that the concept of truth conveyed through ancient Greek mythologies is connected to the same truth of the modern day, but the medium of mythology is no longer particularly relevant.⁹³⁷ While Schelling would eventually extend his discussion of truth in mythology in *Philosophie die Mythologie*, it is important to take into account the connection he makes in his earlier work. Even at this early point, Schelling argues for a progression from mythology to revelation, claiming the locus of truth in the modern era is to be found in the Church.⁹³⁸ This means that while the earlier mythological truth was conveyed primarily through the form of Greek drama, Schelling argues that the analogous place in the modern era is not the theatre nor opera, but is in the liturgy of the church as a kind of 'sacred play.'⁹³⁹ Here is where we find the connection to Pannenberg.

As noted in the above discussion of an ecstatic response of creation, the first arena of ecstatic response is the individual to God as found in the church. This ecstatic response is important to understanding how God relates to humanity through the medium of history, particularly if we are to give an account of the present experience of the proleptic occurrence of the *eschaton* at the historical event of the resurrection. Pannenberg elaborates on the ecstatic response by noting that 'the Christian liturgy is still a sacred play at

⁹³⁷ Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, ed. and trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 45.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 230.

the centre of which is the supper that sums up the ministry and destiny of Jesus and links the created reality of human beings and their social life with their eschatological destiny.⁹⁴⁰ Pannenberg continues by noting that it is the experience of this ‘play’ that elicits the ecstatic response by turning us from individuals concerned with their own identity toward ‘the life-world which individuals [all] share.’ It is in this way that ‘ecstasy’ is ‘characteristic of [sacred] play.’⁹⁴¹ Thus history is presented imaginatively to the Christian in the experience of the Eucharist. This concept, clearly presented in Pannenberg, is rooted in Schelling’s discussion of truth, which was presented in ancient Greek drama as it has been replaced, positively, by the Eucharist,⁹⁴² and brings together the tension of experiencing these points of time (past, present, future) simultaneously in one ecstatic experience occurring within history, though in incomplete form.

Given that the Eucharist is a representation of the dying of the one who would be revealed to have been the Christ at the resurrection, to borrow the language indicative of Pannenberg’s *Jesus—God and Man*, we might argue that we are presented with the proleptic unification of history possible as a result of the resurrection. In the Eucharist we see that God in Christ makes himself low so that we might take Christ into ourselves. By taking Christ into ourselves we are reminded that we partake in his history, but also that he makes himself dependent upon our actions within time. The picture of mutual dependence is made explicit as we understand the past event of the upper room enacted by us presently made effective by the proleptic appearance of the future in the resurrection. Whether we can, in good faith, make such an extension of Pannenberg’s thought, particularly as pertains to the role of the Spirit in the act of *creatio continua*, depends in large part upon whether we

⁹⁴⁰ ATP, 337-338.

⁹⁴¹ ATP, 338.

⁹⁴² See Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 230ff. Here Schelling argues that truth used to be expressed in Greek dramas, but in his day this same dramatic depiction of otherwise indescribable truth was not found ‘in the Opera, but in the Sacrament.’

might utilise Pannenberg's claims concerning the spirit in such a way that it makes a substantive claim about the nature of God.

By making an appeal to the Stoics, and in turn to Schelling, we have set the stage for Pannenberg's own radical treatment of history. While Pannenberg is not explicit on the particular details, nevertheless, given his reliance upon Stoicism with respect to the nature of the dynamic field and Schelling as concerns the relation of the incarnation and human freedom, we can mitigate some of the shortcomings from Pannenberg's explanation of field theory to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between field and history. The tension inherent in the nature of God manifesting himself as history, analogous to the *tonos* described by Stoics, can be addressed through Pannenberg's unique application of field, as described in the next section. In this way, we may see the fuller potential given by Pannenberg's approach to the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

5 Approaching the Tension through Interpreting Pannenberg's Theology as One of History

5.1 Reinterpreting Pannenberg's Use of Field

Although he initially rejects the use of 'field' as metaphor in relation to the Spirit, toward the end of his public life, Pannenberg reluctantly stated that his use of field amounts to an analogy. In doing so, however, much of the force of Pannenberg's claims with respect to field would seem to be forfeited. The prior constructive claims that Pannenberg had made in light of field, if it is to be understood as merely analogy, can no longer have the strong ontological weight they would have were Pannenberg saying that his identification of Spirit with field is something *more than* an analogy. This section will attempt to salvage and rework Pannenberg's use of the concept of field, further demonstrating its theological application more broadly, and its connection to the issue of divine sovereignty and human freedom more directly. It is essential to understand Pannenberg's use of field as making constitutive statements about God's nature, particularly as it pertains to his work creating history and in light of the statements on *tonos* as God manifests himself to and for his creation, for us to make the stronger claims of the next

section that outline exactly *how* God manifests himself to create and sustain that creation.

In the foreword to a 2005 work about Pannenberg's theology by Charles Gutenson, Pannenberg states that 'I use the term "field" in an analogical sense' claiming that this is nevertheless 'not simply a metaphorical use.'⁹⁴³ Yet this concession to the 'analogical sense' is out of line with his position in the earlier paper '*Geist als Feld – nur eine Metapher?*' that comprises a more complete explanation of his intended use of field *vis a vis* the question of metaphor or analogy. There Pannenberg claims that the 'analogical sense' may best be understood as a satisfactory beginning point for understanding the way in which he employs field theory, but should not be considered a complete explanation of his use of the term. While this initial article was written prior to the publication of his forward in Gutenson's book, in a later article published in 2006 in *Zygon*, Pannenberg points to his use, and that of Thomas Torrance, of the field concept as more than an analogy, arguing that God makes himself manifest in the world to create it.⁹⁴⁴ In Pannenberg's article, it is clear that he means this manifestation of God to be taken in an ontological sense incompatible with the suggested application of field as only analogy, as suggested by Gutenson.

Further, it becomes particularly unclear how Pannenberg can claim that his use amounts to an 'analogy,' as he does in Gutenson's work, while also denying that it is a 'metaphor,' as he does on two separate occasions, as noted above. In no other paper or statement did Pannenberg reduce his use of field theory to the 'analogical sense,' nor has he written any further statements on field theory beyond this rather abrupt and concise reversal in the aforementioned forward to Gutenson's analysis of Pannenberg. While metaphor and analogy are not completely interchangeable, they are similar enough, specifically as regards to what extent Pannenberg's use of 'field' is

⁹⁴³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Foreword,' in *Reconsidering the Doctrine of God*, trans. Charles E. Gutenson (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), vii-viii.

⁹⁴⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Problems between Science and Theology in the Course of their Modern History,' *Zygon* 41, no. 6 (2006): 105-112.

ontological, that they should both be rejected as the primary sense in which we understand Pannenberg's use of field theory. It should be noted that this shift is very uncharacteristic of Pannenberg, who, in his published works, has maintained a remarkable level of consistency.⁹⁴⁵ It may be the case that Pannenberg utilises field as analogy in one sense, while moving beyond analogy in another because his use of field theory is not 'mere' analogy.

In order to avoid the particular type of panentheism that, by ignoring the ecstatic response of creation, effectively removes the required distinctions between creator and created, it is a fairly safe assumption that Pannenberg's use of field is not a literal description of the creation of the material world, or at least not a direct one-to-one correspondence between the field of physics and the work of the Holy Spirit in creation. What remains to be shown, then, is in what way field is more than a metaphor or analogy. Pannenberg's use of field is only sensible if the field is understood to be a temporal one instead of a material one. In this way, and only in this way, may we not only understand Pannenberg's theology as one of history, but also describe the way in which describing his theology as such allows us to satisfyingly resolve the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, the question of human freedom in relation to divine sovereignty is fundamentally a question of history in the broader sense as defined in chapter three. In order to address this broader sense of history, and present a resolution to our driving problem, the focus must shift away from a static ontology and toward the dynamic interaction between persons, humanity and God, that is only sensible in the context of time and history.

5.2 God's Action as Temporal Field

A lot is at stake for Pannenberg's theology with reference to field theory. Gutenson, in whose work Pannenberg's seeming reversal appears as a foreword, correctly summarises the goal of Pannenberg's appeal field theory

⁹⁴⁵ Ted Peters, 'Introduction,' *TTN*, 8.

as an attempt to provide an account for ‘nonembodied intentional causality.’⁹⁴⁶ The assumption, to this point, has been that Pannenberg is describing field theory in *theology* as best understood via analogy. However, this is not a purely theological issue, since scientific theories and models have ‘some level of philosophical reflection’ of which they are only approximate.⁹⁴⁷ It is equally true that the terminology of ‘field,’ and indeed any descriptive model, is analogical in *scientific* descriptions. For Pannenberg, not only do ‘field theories of science,’ constitute ‘approximations,’⁹⁴⁸ but the vast majority of scientific models should be considered approximations that do not give an exact representation of reality, though still conveying significant truth concerning that same reality.⁹⁴⁹ We can say, then, that the concept of field theory is as directly applicable to the Spirit as it is to the physical universe. They are equally analogous, but are analogies of different kinds.

To help understand this, consider the Standard Model from physics. While it has been the primary method for understanding quantum and particle physics since its widespread adoption in the 1960s and 1970s, it is known not to account entirely for the pull of gravity upon particles, nor does it allow neutrinos to oscillate, which would indicate that they have mass and be in violation of the Standard Model. However, the oscillation of neutrinos, and thus their mass, has been directly observed as part of the OPERA project.⁹⁵⁰ This is not to say that the Standard Model is without merit, especially since it has successfully predicted the existence of many particles prior to their confirmed discovery, most famously in recent memory the Higgs-Boson, but, we can clearly see an example of how scientific modelling works. The

⁹⁴⁶ Gutenson, *Doctrine*, 169-170; Gutenson employs this phrase throughout his discussion of Pannenberg’s use of field theory.

⁹⁴⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘God as Spirit—And Natural Science,’ *Zygon* 36, no. 4 (2001): 783.

⁹⁴⁸ Pannenberg, ‘The Doctrine of Creation,’ 5-8.

⁹⁴⁹ Pannenberg, ‘Theological Appropriations,’ 259.

⁹⁵⁰ Press Release from CERN, ‘Particle Chameleon Caught in the Act of Changing,’ 31 May 2010, available online < <http://press.web.cern.ch/press-releases/2010/05/particle-chameleon-caught-act-changing> > accessed 20 May 2015.

Standard Model is a best approximation, not an exact representation, of the physical universe. When Pannenberg states that the Spirit functions as ‘field’ in an analogical sense, we do well to consider this in the same analogical sense that current descriptions of field approximate physical reality. Both ‘field theory’ and the understanding of Spirit as ‘field’ are approximations that can continue to be useful and constructive for our dialogue, with the understanding that they may continue to be improved and neither are particularly dogmatic.

While this may preclude critics from alleging that Pannenberg engages in field theory as only metaphor, it does not yet solve our more pressing issue: how is Pannenberg utilising field theory, and in what ways does this address the issue of divine causation? While I have indicated that Pannenberg’s use of field should be considered in light of the Stoic concept of *pneuma* and viewed through the lens of Schelling (and Scotus),⁹⁵¹ this could still be sharpened. Pannenberg provides some of the language for this:

I do not contend that the divine spirit is sending forth waves that can be counted and measured. But neither is the word *field* as applied to God, who is spirit, just a vague analogy or a poetic expression. It is certainly a metaphor, like the field concept of physics itself is.... But it is not a vague analogy, either in science or in theology. It has a clear and conceptual meaning in its connection with the concepts of space and time. If that were not the case, the use of the field concept would indeed become vague. It is because of its connection with the concepts of space and time that a sufficiently precise theological use of the field concept is possible that is clearly distinct from its use in physics and yet related to it.⁹⁵²

The first part of this quote from Pannenberg has been addressed above: the spirit as field is analogical, but only insofar as the term ‘field’ is analogical in

⁹⁵¹ Pannenberg affirms the connection of Scotist contingency to freedom and field, though indirectly referencing a ‘Medieval philosopher’ whose concept of contingency is contrary to the Aristotelian, see ‘God as Spirit,’ 784. This indirectness may account for some of the neglect in secondary literature to account for the influence of Scotus upon Pannenberg.

⁹⁵² Pannenberg, ‘God as Spirit,’ 788.

physics. What remains to be elucidated is the manner in which the concept of field is connected to 'space and time' yet remains distinct from its use in physics. Somewhat helpfully, Pannenberg makes clear that this relation of space and time is in connection with the 'eternal' nature of God.⁹⁵³

Given that Pannenberg readily refers to the '*dynamic*' character of field, the connection of field to historical or temporal event should not be ignored.⁹⁵⁴ For Pannenberg, the issue to be avoided is any thought that *pneuma* manifests as the material universe, as Origen's misinterpretation of the Stoic *pneuma* would suggest. Field theory avoids the 'problem of bodily existence,' while still allowing interaction through the 'dynamic movement of force, together with spatial extension.'⁹⁵⁵ Given his comments regarding Faraday's use of field, and his emphasis on the movement and motion of God, we are left to conclude that, for Pannenberg, the primary point of consonance between theology and physics is not found in replacing the Spirit with the concept of field, but by applying the type of causal interaction that occurs with field in relation to the material universe in a different manner. The Spirit does not manifest himself as physical material substances, when acting as field, but is manifest in a manner that, nevertheless, connects the Spirit to the field concept. We find this connection, in Pannenberg's theology, via the temporal idea. By examining Pannenberg's theology we will find that, for Pannenberg, the Spirit is not manifest as matter, but as the source of time (and, with it, history).

In the same way that non-material fields can produce material substance by their interaction, and in so doing become so inextricably tied with matter that, while remaining distinct from matter (the fields can be measured via material means, but remain immaterial) so also the eternal God can create *temporal* singularities, and in so doing binds himself to time, while still remaining distinct from finite time, (and yet is known through history

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Theology and Science,' *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 13, no. 3 (1992): 307.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid.

itself, via his own historical revelation). As Pannenberg states, ‘The presence of God’s Spirit in his creation can be described as a field of creative presence, a comprehensive field of force that releases *event after event* into finite existence.’⁹⁵⁶ And phrased differently elsewhere: ‘We may imagine, then, the reality of God in terms of the *comprehensive field of eternity*, comprising space and time and dynamically producing the temporal existence of creatures in space through its futurity in relation to all potential events.’⁹⁵⁷

God does not, then, manifest himself as the physical universe, but manifests himself as the grounding of temporal events with which the physical universe interacts, moves, and operates. If we consider that the universe is comprised of three or four spatial dimensions and one or two temporal dimension, God embodies himself as the grounding for that/those temporal dimension(s) which remains distinct from, yet inextricably linked to the spatial. The spatial/material objects of creation, including human persons, ‘live and move and have [their] being’⁹⁵⁸ in the manifestation of God as the grounding of time. The historical act of creation occurs from the unifying eternity of God, from which all of creation emanates and toward which it is returning via its ecstatic response to that same eternity. The direction of history, then, is toward the Christ event, which demonstrates the ultimate end of history. All historical events, which is to say time itself, is connected to the manifestation of God as the source of history.

To finish drawing the parallel between the dynamic life of the Spirit and the way field from physics brings about the material world, we should briefly describe the latter in more precise terms. The generally accepted view from modern physics is that the universe began as a singularity. At the time of said singularity the laws of physics, as universally accepted among those who adopt the singularity, do not apply, nor, considering the amount of gravitation exerted by the singularity, *can* they apply. As the ‘Big Bang’ occurred, the

⁹⁵⁶ IST, 49; emphasis added.

⁹⁵⁷ Pannenberg, ‘Theology and Science,’ 307.

⁹⁵⁸ Acts 17:28, *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, p.d.

intense concentration of the universe in connection with the gravitational field, also a result of the ‘infinitely dense’ singularity, interacts with the space-time and energy to produce objects of mass, or matter, that change and adapt through regular interaction with these fields, to yield the physical universe as we know it.⁹⁵⁹ While some have gone to the extreme of suggesting that this initial singularity simply *is* God,⁹⁶⁰ Pannenberg takes great strides to maintain a distinction between Creator and created. However, as has been stated above, we are concerned with types of causal interaction between the field of physics and the physical universe, not a one-to-one correspondence. In the realm of physics, then, there is an overarching, all-pervasive field that manifests as a singularity. Once the singularity begins to expand in to the universe the interaction between matter, the field and the singularity, which in turn produces additional gravitational fields, all interact to produce the physical universe. The singularity is distinct from the field, but is nevertheless tied to it, produced from it, and influenced by it.

In the same way, the Spirit, acting as a dynamic field, manifests as a temporal singularity. This temporal singularity interacts with the world as it is initially created and the continuing existence of creation through the field of the Spirit as it continually manifests as new temporal singularities with which creation interacts. Thus the interaction between the temporal singularities of the Spirit and the created world, through the dynamic field of the Spirit result in history. History can only be fully and properly understood from God’s perspective, as noted in chapter three, then, because only God, as Spirit, is the unifying causal force for all of history while it is co-created with various finite aspects of creation.

This has profound implications for our discussion up to this point. By stating that God is involved in creation through acting as the grounding for

⁹⁵⁹ One of the now-famous papers where this is outlined in more technical detail is Stephen W. Hawking and Roger Penrose, ‘The Singularities of Gravitational Collapse and Cosmology,’ *Proceedings from the Royal Society London A* 314: 1519 (1970): 529-548. Available for free at: <http://rspa.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/royprsa/314/1519/529.full.pdf> Accessed 18 October 2015.

⁹⁶⁰ Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 83.

each present event from the final future event Pannenberg is treading close to the view of many ‘open theists,’ while also distinguishing himself from them, and avoiding the pitfalls with respect to divine sovereignty inherent in their claims. Open theism was developed as a theodicy in light of the doctrine of divine omniscience. Briefly, the problem was that if God knows at the present time that a future horrific event will occur, is this distinguishable from his causing it? The open theist would suggest, instead, that the future is not caused by God and is not known to God because the future has not yet occurred, and thus is not a ‘thing’ that can be known.⁹⁶¹

The idea of future choices being genuine alternative possibilities is important here. Without using the term ‘contingency,’ most work in open theism readily employs the concept as defined in the first chapter. While many state that the freedom this affords is a sort of ‘limited freedom,’ there is not a clearly outlined structure for how they can be assured that God’s purposes are eventually accomplished, though this claim is frequently made.⁹⁶² Open theists seem content to argue that God will secure certain aspects of the end as determined.⁹⁶³ In contrast Pannenberg makes a much stronger claim regarding the sovereignty of God in his statement that not only has the end of history already been declared, it has already occurred and was witnessed, proleptically, in the midst of history. Further, open theism seems to speak of God working within history presently, pushing it forward in cooperation with humanity, but Pannenberg describes God as existing in that end of history already, pulling and enticing all of creation toward that end, without overwhelming it. These are key distinctions from the open theist.

For Pannenberg, God is not a subject of temporal forces that he may choose to overwhelm at will, but is the creator of those forces. The only future

⁹⁶¹ Thomas Jay Oord, ‘An Open Theology Doctrine of Creation and Solution to the Problem of Evil,’ in *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science*, ed. Thomas Jay Oord (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2009), 28-52.

⁹⁶² See for instance, John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 45-46.

⁹⁶³ See, *ibid.*, 230-234.

event that already exists, is the one that constitutes the end of history. All other future events are continuously brought into being by the God of the future in cooperation with his already existing creation. God, as Spirit, manifests himself as temporal contingencies to bring about the continuance of creation vis a vis history. For Pannenberg, his use of field is distinguished from that of its use in physics in that he is primarily concerned with God's manifestation of himself as the primary source of history from the end of history, while physics is concerned with the manifestation of field as matter within space. The field of God is also different from other fields in the sense that, unlike fields of energy or mass, the field of God includes 'divine purpose' which is 'legitimate only with regard to the fact that the divine act of creation relates to the universe as a whole and therefore includes its final future as well as its beginning.'⁹⁶⁴

This sense of purpose is vital for maintaining the doctrine of divine sovereignty as will be discussed below. It is not that God has fully defined every aspect for all events, since this would eliminate contingency, but that God acts as the grounding upon which events come into being through his continuous creation until the end of history is achieved. The end of history is defined, and God continues to bring creation toward that end, but the number of events between now and that end remains entirely contingent.

Here I should note a subtle clarification I have made to Pannenberg's point. While Pannenberg is content, though on rare occasion, to refer to God as manifesting as *temporal events*, I suggest, as a way to more clearly enforce the creator-creation distinction, that we instead refer to God as manifesting as the *grounding* for temporal events. This additional separation resounds more clearly with the Idealist tradition, particularly that of Schelling, and more clearly denotes the distinction between creator and created. If we allow that God has given up on his aseity to 'make himself dependent,' this does not mean, by any means, that we are not still dependent upon him. Indeed, this ensures a dependence of humanity upon his continued manifestation as a

⁹⁶⁴ Pannenberg, 'God as Spirit,' 786.

temporal field, which acts as the grounding of our being, while simultaneously allowing us to better understand how our temporal/historical actions remain independent of God. In other words, it better preserves the independent-dependent tension first identified at the end of chapter one.

Turning back, now, to the ‘end of the world’ event, when Christ says that ‘not even the Son of Man knows the hour,’ it is because Christ, experiencing the world in non-eternal form, cannot know when the end will come as its timing is not yet determined; it could be in ten years or a thousand or a million or more. The end of history is always just beyond our horizon of observation, with new history being created between it and our present ‘now,’ until history finally results in that already defined end of history. The end does not occur until it arises organically out of the free choices of creation made in cooperation with the sovereign sustaining will of God. God, the Spirit as field, continues to act as the grounding for history from the future end until the temporal existence of the universe collides with that end, being absorbed into eternity. If we understand the field of Spirit to be a genuine field of time, continually allowing for the creation of history from its end, we will arrive at a workable solution for the perceived conflict between divine sovereignty and human freedom. This has profound implications for our broader understanding of other doctrines as well.

As discussed in the second chapter, for Pannenberg, in line with Schelling, God is only God insofar as he is sovereign. Also for Pannenberg, in the act of creation God is made dependent upon history. God creates by manifesting himself as temporal field, yet is only sovereign if he is able to bring about his own purpose and end. Given the connection we are making between God’s action in history and God in his sovereignty, let us return to the connection made above regarding the economic and immanent Trinity. The economic Trinity is God’s activity among his creation, while the immanent Trinity is God existing in his sovereignty. By creating as the grounding of history, God has not merely inserted himself into an external history, but has made his sovereignty, which is to say his identity, dependent upon the course of history. God is not revealed to be, nor is he actually the immanent Trinity

apart from his sovereign existence. Yet, if he is manifest as the temporal field that produces history, via the Spirit, God cannot be sovereign except at the end of history, when history is presented in its fullness, and its goals and purposes have been achieved. Thus we must say that God does not exist, from our present finite existence, as sovereign, and only in this way ‘does not yet exist’ as God.

This later qualification Pannenberg gives, ‘from our finite perspective,’ is important in light of his depiction of eternity. For Pannenberg the ‘end of history,’ is the moment when our fragmentary picture of history is united with eternity, history as it truly exists. Eternity, as discussed in chapter four, consists of the simultaneity of time and a ‘temporal thickness’ to time. The whole of time *is* eternity, not time in atemporality, but in its completion, as opposed to fragmentary nature. History can have meaning because all of it, from beginning to end, can be understood in its connection and complexity, thus answering Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey, first mentioned in chapter three, in an unexpected manner. Only an infinite being can understand the entirety of the infinite series that comprises history, but this comprehension must also be done infinitely. Therefore we can say that God exists sovereignly from eternity, but from the perspective of our present finite existence does not yet exist, in this restricted sense. By yielding his sovereignty for the sake of our finite existence, God makes space within his history for ours.

This is not to say that God is in no way sovereign, though. Instead we can affirm sovereignty in the present from a different perspective. If divine sovereignty consists in God achieving his goals absolutely, then God demonstrates his sovereignty in the resurrection of Christ by bringing about this goal. At the same time, God maintains our present freedom by continually releasing the grounding of events from the future into our present. For each historical event to truly be contingent, its outcome must be undetermined, yet we argue that the final outcome of these events, the end of history, is already defined. In order to overcome this, we do not view history as a fixed timeline, but as one that is continually growing and expanding. God will continue to release the grounding of history until history contingently produces his goal.

The whole of time is the result of God's manifestation beyond himself as temporal field, continually broadening and expanding this manifestation.

It is here that the role of the economic Trinity, in particular the Son as incarnate and the Spirit as field, is brought again to the fore. First let us examine the role of the Son as incarnate. The role of the incarnate Son is important not only for the proleptic appearance of the end of history at the resurrection, but equally so in the redemptive work as the Son. To understand how this is so, it will be important first to consider a unique understanding of sin as it pertains to history.

To give an account of sin within a theology of history, we must consider the ways in which human history may be distinct from divine history. While it was argued in chapter three that history is properly understood only from a divine perspective, given the necessity of maintaining a creator-creature distinction we might consider the way in which humanity attempts to create distinct history. Humanity, it may be argued, works within the temporal field of the Spirit toward ends that are opposed to the nature of God. In so doing, humans create a distinct and separate history, but since humans are not entirely sovereign, it is a temporary, ephemeral and false history. This false history is what Pannenberg considers a key characteristic of humanity's inability to bring about the fullness of the image of God,⁹⁶⁵ and so might be labelled 'sin' within the context of his theology of history. In particular, Pannenberg contrasts our 'participation in the process of our own history,' apart from God as sin, with the idea that 'only God can cause the image of himself to shine within us,' while still acknowledging that 'our participation...is not excluded.'⁹⁶⁶ Pannenberg makes clear his view that 'the moment we take our destiny of fellowship with God into our own hands, we are already sinners and have missed the mark.'⁹⁶⁷

⁹⁶⁵ ST2, 227-228.

⁹⁶⁶ ST2, 228.

⁹⁶⁷ ST2, 228; It should be noted that the term translated 'destiny' in the English version of Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* is most frequently, as it is here, *Die Bestimmung*, which, especially in this context that speaks of independent and autonomous action, should be translated as 'purpose' or 'intention' rather than 'determination' or, as in the Bromiley

The affirmation of Gregory Nazianzus's claim, 'what is not assumed is not healed,' is instructive here. By becoming incarnate, God in Christ invites us to place our history, voluntarily, in line with his history to meet a common goal. While 'at present the goal [*seems*] indistinct,' this goal is revealed, proleptically, 'at the resurrection.'⁹⁶⁸ So we find that in binding our history to that of Christ, and in his death, that Christ reshapes our history toward his own, and immediately upon his death, in which our old history has ended, we are brought to new life. As Pannenberg states it, 'Jesus...does not come to this history as something external,' but becomes part of it, and only in so doing transforms it.⁹⁶⁹ So our history is taken into his history directed toward the resurrection through our freely made decision to pursue his goal.

We cannot find our identity, and thus our lasting existence, within the present. Instead, for Pannenberg, 'the attempt of sinners to base their identity of totality of their own lives on the Now...is bound to fail because in the flux of time each Now is replaced by another Now.'⁹⁷⁰ According to Pannenberg, the internal drive for all living creatures is not merely the freedom of a fleeting now, as Schelling argues, but is 'a desire for the totality of life that they do not yet fully possess.'⁹⁷¹ This is obtained by 'participation in the eternity of God,' yet is inhibited by the 'separation from God' inherent in our finitude.⁹⁷²

The task, then, is to overcome the gap between our finite existence and the future 'end of history,' that we cannot obtain due to that same finite existence. 'Only in the history of Jesus of Nazareth did the eschatological future, and with it the eternity of God, really enter into the historical

translation 'destiny,' which carries deterministic undertones intentionally absent from Pannenberg's text.

⁹⁶⁸ ST2, 228-229, quote from 228.

⁹⁶⁹ JGM, 13.

⁹⁷⁰ ST3, 598.

⁹⁷¹ ST3, 600.

⁹⁷² ST3 601.

present.⁹⁷³ For Pannenberg, then, the entering of the *eschaton* into the present is the moment of redemption and it is predicated upon the incarnation of Jesus, though he is only revealed to have been the incarnate Christ at the resurrection, not his death only. We find the end of history, then, in the work of God from his eternity, the immanent Trinity, breaking into the course of history. 'The inbreaking of the present of the coming kingdom is granted to others also insofar as they accept the message of Jesus and open themselves to his work.'⁹⁷⁴

The infinite gap between the present course of history and the 'end of history,' which must remain, to some extent, distinct lest it overwhelm the freedom of creation can nevertheless be overcome by the action of the infinite God who brings about that same history. By opening ourselves to the message of Christ, and dying with Christ, we not only bind our history with his, and so experience new life with him, but also trust in the coming kingdom that reveals God's infinite nature. That trust, through which we proleptically experience the infinite God opens us up not merely to a generic 'work' of God, but to our own ecstatic response to him. Redemption is life in that it elicits a more complete *ecstasis* within each of those who trust in God through Christ.

Not only, then, does the redemption of Christ redeem our false history by transforming it to be part of his history, but it also ensures a more complete freedom as we respond ecstatically to his infinite nature revealed in the resurrection. The mutual dependence of God's sovereignty upon our free actions and our freedom upon his completed goal, is characteristic of the flow of history as it is understood to be an extension of the *creatio continua* first highlighted in chapter one. For Pannenberg, in Jesus we see that, following his death, the end of history appeared proleptically at the resurrection as the consummation of his identity as Christ and further accomplishing the purposes of God. Pannenberg affirms even in the midst of our surrender, 'our

⁹⁷³ ST3, 604.

⁹⁷⁴ ST3, 604.

participation...is not excluded,' from bringing about the final end of history that has been achieved.⁹⁷⁵ The dichotomy of either surrender or participation is a false one.

We act in our own autonomy, but we do so as part of a larger whole bringing about the actualization of the Kingdom of God, as we are encouraged toward his goal via our ecstatic response to God. In other words, the accomplishment of God's purposes have depended, at least in part, on the free actions of those who are found to be bound to Christ, though Christ, acting freely as the man Jesus, has secured this end. The release of an undefined amount of temporal instants from Spirit is important in this for it leaves room for the freedom of humanity.⁹⁷⁶ Simply put, God as Spirit will continue to act as the grounding for history, and in so doing cooperate with creation, until history arrives, contingently, at the already observed end of history. Some of the tension within this view of time/history is resolved through the application of multidimensional time, a concept introduced, in this thesis, at the end of chapter four. If time exists as at least two dimensions, then the complete experience of time would necessarily include past, present and future simultaneously. If we also accept that time/history is contingent, but is also multidimensional, there is no reason to assume that the end of history could not itself be fixed, while other aspects of it remain contingent. In other words, the character and nature of that temporal event, seen proleptically at the resurrection and from which God acts, already exist, but its location within history is not yet fixed. Further, in the same way that four dimensional space may bend in upon itself in a way that is imperceptible to a three dimensional perspective of space, so also could multidimensional time exist.

I should emphasize, again, as I did in chapter four, that this does not mean that God exists upon one dimension of time and humanity exists upon another. Rather, all of creation exists within the same multi-dimensional time,

⁹⁷⁵ ST2, 228.

⁹⁷⁶ A more concrete way to consider it is this: the end of history exists just beyond the horizon of our perception of the future. Our actions could meet that history tomorrow, or next year, or in a hundred years, or more. At some point, our history will find its conclusion at that end, but 'when' (a term that would need heavy qualification in this context) that occurs is undefined or contingent, in the Scotist sense.

as does God. Creation, from its finite perspective, however, cannot experience the fullness of time in all its complexity, while God, being infinite, can experience it in fullness while also acting as the grounding for its continued creation. This does still require a view of history that, as noted above, means all future events remain contingent, and thus unknown, even by God. It also continues to mean that the placement of the final ‘end of history’ is still unsettled. Finally, it continues to mean that, by becoming that grounding for history, ‘makes himself dependent,’ upon the actions of his creation. This is especially remarkable considering the limited perspective of creation, but perhaps gives more of an avenue for the understanding the manner in which God might act as a guide, without overwhelming the freedom of creation.

Conclusion

This chapter extended the field discussion of the last chapter by first noting how non-material fields have been observed to connect to the material world: via singularities or manifestations of the field in contingent objects. In the same way, then, we must argue the Spirit manifests himself as a singularity to bring about creation. Yet the Spirit does not manifest himself as the material objects of creation. Rather, by manifesting himself, the Spirit elicits an ecstatic response within creation, which can be understood via Polanyi’s modification of Teilhard’s ‘Omega Point.’ Given the nature of ecstatic relation, however, there is a potential danger of eliminating the distinction between Creator and created. This can be resolved, while still maintaining that God manifests himself to foster creation, through the modification of panentheism offered by Philip Clayton, that overcomes the objections to panentheism made by Pannenberg. What remains, though, is a tension between the contingent and independent existence of both God and free creatures. Rather than problematic, however, one can see the connection of field to a creative tension stretching back to the Stoic concept of *tonos* in relation to the *pneuma*. Nevertheless, the Stoic model alone is inadequate to extend Pannenberg’s theology of history. Instead, it must be modified through Schelling’s view of history, in such a way that it connects the future end of

history to the present experience of that history, still held in tension, as is witnessed in the Eucharistic sacrament that Schelling parallels with the Greek drama. For our discussion, this essentially means that divine sovereignty is not in opposition to human freedom, despite the tension between the two, but that divine sovereignty will necessarily entail human freedom in the context of the creation of the world, since God, by creating out of himself, makes himself dependent upon that world, as claimed by Pannenberg⁹⁷⁷.

The tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom, however, is approached in a new manner through careful elaboration of Pannenberg's field concept in a few key areas. First, the application of field must be understood to be making an ontological claim concerning the nature of God and God's creation. Second, the field must not be understood as a field that produces space or matter, but as the source or grounding of all time and history. By describing God as acting as the grounding for each new future event from history's end, as Pannenberg does, we can then connect this with the broader theology of history to address the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom, especially if it is considered within a multidimensional time structure.

⁹⁷⁷ It is true that numerous thinkers, including Hegel, Schelling as well as many others, have made a similar claim, but the one made by Pannenberg here should be seen to have its root in Schelling, as discussed in chapter 2.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this thesis, I noted the two primary objectives, which, during the course of the thesis, hinge upon the completion of a third objective. The first objective was to demonstrate that Wolfhart Pannenberg's theological corpus comprises a single, coherent theology of history, understood in terms of Scotus and Schelling, primarily. The second was to demonstrate that through a proper understanding of Pannenberg's theology as one of history, a novel approach to the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom could be obtained. The third objective, which emerged as critical to the primary two objectives, was reframing and reinterpreting Pannenberg's appeal to field theory in such a way that could respond to both concerns, as well as give further clarity to Pannenberg's other theological commitments. The result is a view of history that simultaneously affirms the sovereignty of God over history, but suggests God yields the exercise of that sovereignty in certain specific ways to allow the free choices of humanity to come about and be incorporated into his history whose end is defined.

1 History, Methodology, and Freedom

1.1 Pannenberg's Theology of History

The thesis began with two foundational chapters that established the groundwork pursuing thesis' objectives as reiterated just above. The initial chapter argued in new ways for the decisive influence that John Duns Scotus's concept of contingency has upon Pannenberg's formulation of a theology of history. This influence was shown to have two facets for our purposes. First, it establishes a contingency of the future and the present, but not the past. Once an event moves out of the future and through the present, it is determined such that it can be appealed to for its revelatory worth since it is defined and will

not shift in its content. This stands in stark contrasts to both Aristotle, who did not allow for a contingency of the present, and Leibniz, who required that the past remain contingent, as discussed in the first two sections of chapter one. The vital facet of Scotist contingency is that it establishes a particular sort of contingency. It is not mere indeterminism, which leads to a stochastic understanding of the universe, but is contingency that allows for purpose. While, for Leibniz, events are contingent because they rely upon the goodness of God to actualize them out of many options, for Scotus, an event can be contingent because it relies upon the causal effect of human decisions that are free to some meaningful degree. To be sure, Leibniz allows for freedom as well, but this is entirely due to God's sustained impartation of freedom, rather than a trait now inherent within humans, as in Scotus.⁹⁷⁸ In the context of chapter one, this understanding of contingency opened the discourse to a broader one of time and history as it connects to creation. Through the concepts of *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*, the tension between divine and human independence, which is connected to the second driving question of the thesis (divine sovereignty and human freedom) was also introduced. This led to the second foundational issue.

The second chapter introduced the concept of a theology of history through the lens of Friedrich W. J. Schelling, by which Pannenberg would operate. The influence of Schelling upon Pannenberg cannot be understated. Schelling's insistence on the freedom of humanity, first explicitly stated in his 'Essay on Human Freedom,' is adapted by Pannenberg to mean that revelation must occur indirectly. As detailed in the second chapter, a direct sort of revelation, with which Barth and Bultmann are concerned, would overwhelm the freedom of human persons given the nature of the sovereignty of God. Instead revelation must understood as an indirect communication, one that is interpreted not directly from a text or sermon or 'event' or 'encounter,' but

⁹⁷⁸ It is the difference between humanity being free because God declares that it is so (as in Leibniz) and humans being free because God chooses not to overwhelm the freedom inherent in their existence as independent creatures (as in Scotus). The former says that freedom is possible because it just is, while the latter provides a framework for freedom to be possible because God's actions are connected to human actions in such a way that one does not overwhelm the other (i.e. it is less declarative).

through examination of revelatory acts within history. Of course, this was also met with the problem of forms of revelation that do seem to be direct, but these might be allowed, in Pannenberg's application, by arguing that these are limited, temporary, limitations of God's sovereignty for the purpose of direct encounter. Schelling's call, toward the end of his *Spätphilosophie*, to expand his 'philosophy of history' through an appeal to the philosophy of science must likewise be understood as bearing importantly on the emphasis upon God's historic action in Pannenberg's theology.

Chapter three continued this discussion by expanding the scope of history toward a universal or natural history. The expansion of the scope of history to include cosmic, or natural, history helps us to see Pannenberg's theology as unified around the centre of history, and gives rise to Pannenberg's statements regarding natural and scientific law as an expression of the 'faithfulness of God' to creation.⁹⁷⁹ In light of Dilthey's hermeneutic of history, in particular, coupled with the reframing of history in cosmic terms, 'history' must be understood to be temporal activity understood from a divine perspective, a theme to which we will return below. By reading Pannenberg in this manner, we see the shortcomings of systematic interpretations of Pannenberg that seek to characterise his theology as one that is founded, primarily, upon science or philosophy of science.⁹⁸⁰ As already mentioned,

⁹⁷⁹ See, for instance TTN, 109.

⁹⁸⁰ The many interpreters who interpret Pannenberg's theology primarily as a theology of nature or science that diminish the framing of history in his later writings include: Mark Hocknull, *Pannenberg on Evil, Love and God: The Realisation of Divine Love* (London: Ashgate, 2014); Stewart, *Reconstructing Science and Theology*; Graham J. Watts, *Revelation and the Spirit: A Comparative Study of the Relationship between the Doctrine of Revelation and Pneumatology in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel and of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005); Anja Lebkücker, *Theologie der Natur : Wolfhart Pannenberg's Beitrag zum Dialog zwischen Theologie und Naturwissenschaft* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Theologie, 2011); in particular, Russell, in *Time and Eternity*, acknowledges the role of history, but only through the interlocutor of Hegel, which is problematic for reasons explored below. Russell's analysis, though generally helpful, is also concerned with the theological reinterpretation of science *qua* science, without seeking an intermediary position (philosophy of science); Mention should also be made of André Kendel, *Geschichte, Antizipation und Auferstehung : theologische und texttheoretische Untersuchung zu W. Pannenberg's Verständnis von Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: Oxford Lang, 2001), who begins his analysis well, but in the context of developing his approach, mistakes the contingency of Scotus for a de-emphasis upon the importance of historical *event*, changing his interpretation of Pannenberg to one that is essentially Butlmannian.

this reliance upon Schelling, coupled with Pannenberg's use of the Scotist concept of contingency, also mean that his theology, as a theology of history, approaches doctrines methodologically almost exclusively from a 'bottom up' perspective, setting it apart from most other doctrinal frameworks which to a greater or lesser degree prioritise also the 'top down' perspective.

1.2 A New Methodology for Theology

Pannenberg gives voice to this methodology in his first major work following *Revelation as History*, which is *Jesus—God and Man*, wherein he begins from the historical person of Jesus and goes on to argue that at the resurrection he was revealed to have been the Son of God. This contrasts with many traditional Christologies, which assume Christ's divinity first and then seek to explain, through a speculative approach, how God became man. Contrary to Barth's early assessment of Pannenberg, this 'bottom up' approach was not an isolated experimental methodology, but one that would inform his exploration of other doctrines as well.⁹⁸¹ For instance, even though Pannenberg does not specifically use the language of 'from below' to describe his trinitarian theology, given the decisive 'epistemic priority' he gives to the economic Trinity, as discussed at the end of chapter five, it is difficult to read it as anything other than a trinitarian theology 'from below.' This also means that interpretations of Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* that frame it along trinitarian lines that occur in the classical 'top down' fashion miss something important and decisive in Pannenberg's overall outlook. The doctrine of the Trinity, rather than a guiding *a priori* framework, is the interpretive product of a particular underlying historical principle.⁹⁸²

⁹⁸¹ In his response to Barth's letter to Pannenberg, where Barth suggests that JGM is too 'reactionary' and not sustainable as a long-term theological project, Pannenberg writes back that he does intend to 'focus all theology work on this center' of history in a shift away from Barth's methodology. See Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevestand, eds., *Karl Barth: Letters 1961-1968*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981). Barth's letter pp. 177-179; Pannenberg's reply, pp. 350-352.

⁹⁸² This strain of interpretation is exhibited in the following: Maura Pedrazzoli, *Fede-Ragione in W. Pannenberg: Il problema della credibilità, con riferimento ai contributi di Rahner, Blondel e Pascal* (Rome: Studia Anselmiana, 1981); Alfred Gläßer, *Verweigerter Partnerschaft? Anthropologische, Konfessionelle und Ökumenische Aspekte der Theologie*

Pannenberg develops his understanding of the Trinity by focusing on the actions of the Trinity in history (i.e. the economic Trinity) to develop a doctrine of the Trinity, rather than assuming anything about God or the nature of God or, once determined to be a Trinity, the relation between the persons of the Trinity to each other. To be sure, one must keep in mind our earlier critique regarding the nature of direct or indirect revelation, and perhaps take some of Jesus's historical statements, as well as the experience of Christ at baptism as direct revelation. Once this is done, though, the doctrine of the Trinity can be fully developed from the historical interaction of God with humanity, rather than appealing to some outside divine revelation that is removed from history, or that fails to take into full account the historical element. To be clear, as noted in the postscript to the fifth German edition of *Grundzüge der Christologie*, Pannenberg argues that the 'bottom up' approach is not exclusively bottom-up. Rather, it acts as a starting point and primary grounding point that leads us to utilize history to approach the top-down from a bottom-up perspective first. In other words, the aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity that develop from a 'top-down' approach may still be utilized, but only if the doctrine is approached, and the suitability of a top-down dynamic is established, from a bottom-up (that is to say historical) methodology first.

This modified 'bottom up' methodology continues in Pannenberg's understanding of eschatology. Failure to keep this in mind would allow Pannenberg's theology to lapse into essentially deterministic directions, wherein God, from the future, pulls our present toward that future, acting as the 'all-determining' force for the present.⁹⁸³ Indeed, the perceived

Wolfhart Pannenberg (Regensburg, Deutschland: Friedrich Pustet, 1991); Reginald Nnamdi, *Offenbarung und Geschichte : zur hermeneutischen Bestimmung der Theologie Wolfhart Pannengers* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1993); Iain Taylor, *Pannenberg on the Triune God* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Gutenson, *Reconsidering the Doctrine*.

⁹⁸³ As claimed by the following: Grenz, *Reason for Hope*; Braaten and Clayton. *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, esp. the essays by David Lewis, 'The Nature of the Power of the Future,' 75-94 and David P. Polk, 'The All-Determining God and the Peril of Determinism,' 152-168; Mostert, *God and the Future*; Gutenson, *Reconsidering the Doctrine*. This also precludes too close a connection between Pannenberg and Moltmann's 'Theology of Hope,' which has largely been discredited in the secondary literature, but can be found recently in works such as Michel Gilbertson, *God and History in the Book of Revelation: New Testament*

deterministic pull that an ‘all-determining power from the future’ exerts upon the present is the reason for the rejection by several interpreters of various aspects of Pannenberg’s theology, or its labelling as contradictory. This perceived determinism is only exacerbated by Pannenberg’s insistence that not only is the end of history already defined, but has been observed historically as prolepsis in the resurrection of Jesus. Yet, this prolepsis cannot be simply excised without undermining the foundation of Pannenberg’s *eschatology*, as Kurt Koch attempts to do.⁹⁸⁴ For Pannenberg, the prior historical encounter with the end of history is necessary if he is to build a ‘bottom-up’ eschatology, since our understanding of eschatology must arise, initially, out of historical experience.

1.3 Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom

The nature of the end of history is particularly important for the second driving question of this thesis. Given the nature of contingency in Scotus, we must affirm, as Pannenberg does, that the future is contingent. The defined nature of the end of history does not require us to dispense with its contingency; rather, it compels us to re-interpret how contingency, within the context of history, fits into this model. Pannenberg’s own description of God as the ‘all-determining’ reality from the future should be understood in the context of his later qualification that ‘this all-determining power is determined only by itself and not subject to determination by anything else, unless it determines that it should be determined by something else.’⁹⁸⁵ While such a statement may initially appear either circular or contradictory, once interpreted in light of Schelling, it can be shown to be neither. Recall from chapter two that, in Schelling’s identity philosophy, although God serves as the grounding for all things including himself, when Schelling revisits the concept in his

Studies in Dialogue with Pannenberg and Moltmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹⁸⁴ *Der Gott der Geschichte: Theologie der Geschichte bei Wolfhart Pannenberg als Paradigma einer philosophischen Theologie in ökumenischer Perspektive* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1988).

⁹⁸⁵ TPS, 309 n. 615.

Spätphilosophie, he adds the caveat (from his ‘Freedom Essay’ onward) that God’s self-grounding can be partially⁹⁸⁶ yielded to the free choices of humanity.

As explored in chapters five and six of this thesis, Schelling’s later revival of his identity philosophy serves as the grounding for Pannenberg’s theology of history in which God’s sovereignty depends, in part, upon the free actions of human beings. Yet, if one does not read Pannenberg’s theology through the lens of a theology of history informed by Schelling in this way, one could misinterpret Pannenberg’s claim, presented in his *Systematic Theology* and addressed at length in chapters five and six that ‘God has made himself dependent’ upon the created world. The statement of God’s dependence on the world is Pannenberg’s effort to offer a consistent theology of history that affirms the freedom of humanity and the sovereignty of God, and comes about in the following way.

First, as argued in chapter three and briefly referenced above, Pannenberg makes an appeal to the historical hermeneutic of Dilthey in order to connect his discussion of revelation as history itself with a broader theology of history and to demonstrate that such a perspective is viable. However, in order for historical action to be revelatory—to be comprehensible as knowledge—according to Dilthey’s scheme, Pannenberg must respond to the critique of Gadamer. In addition to expanding the scope of history to a cosmic level, this also means that the end of history must be known by God so that its connection with the rest of history may be conveyed meaningfully to humanity. Further, for Pannenberg, this also means that the height of revelation requires the revealing of this already defined end of history, which Pannenberg locates in the resurrection of Jesus, as discussed in chapter four. In order for history to be understood as not pre-determined, then, the rest of

⁹⁸⁶ In the ‘Freedom Essay’ per se it is not partial, but as noted in chapter two, by the time of *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, God’s action of making himself dependent has been modified substantially.

historical action—from the present up until that future end—must be contingent in character.⁹⁸⁷

Second, the fullness of God's sovereignty as an infinitely sovereign being would overwhelm any independent, freely performed action on the part of his creation. At its root, sovereignty depends upon the ultimate and final rule of God; it means the achievement of divine ends and goals in absolute terms at the end of history. The promise of a defined end of history that has also been observed in the past historical event of the resurrection (where the flow of time was interrupted) is thus a declaration of the ultimate sovereignty of God. However, in order to allow for free actions of humans, God provisionally self-restricts his sovereignty, thus making his sovereignty, and his entire identity as God, dependent upon the course of history that includes human actions, as initially suggested by Schelling. From a human perspective, God is 'not yet' sovereign until humanity's actions bring about that defined end of history in free and wilful cooperation with him. That is to say that God's sovereignty, while defined at the end of history, is by no means guaranteed. Rather, God yields his sovereignty, in its absolute form, and relies upon us to cooperate with his own activity—the nature of which was discussed in chapters five and six and will be revisited below—to bring about the end of history where God is the sovereign King and time is no longer experienced in its current, fragmented state.

We can amplify and clarify this relation of free human creatures to a sovereign God by drawing analogously on the picture of the intra-trinitarian relationship between the Son and the Father with the Holy Spirit as the intermediary. In the same way that the Father gives authority to the Son, as discussed, in chapters five and six, thereby making himself dependent upon the Son, and the Son gives that authority back to the Father, so we can analogously also understand our relation with God. God makes himself dependent upon the course of history, and, in so doing, gives authority to humans. Humans are then presented with the choice to return that authority

⁹⁸⁷ Recall that, for Scotus, the fact of the occurrence of the past is not contingent, though it was brought about contingently.

back to God, thus bringing about the eschatological Kingdom of God. As discussed in chapter six, this redemption is accomplished by the yielding of our history to the history of Christ, through binding our death with his in order to participate in the eschatological Kingdom. In other words, we confess that ‘Jesus is Lord’ and, in so doing, acknowledge that we are not fully sovereign, actively seeking to submit our will to his desired end in order to bring about his reign on earth, which means that we have given up our life so that our death is bound up with Christ’s death. The unification of our history with his, by the act of humble submission, means that, as God was revealed wholly sovereign over the fate of Jesus in the resurrection, so he will be revealed as sovereign over our fate, uniting us with the resurrection. For Pannenberg redemption is given to ‘individuals... [who wilfully] subject themselves to the sovereignty of God.’⁹⁸⁸

The history over which God is the observer, then, is at least partially the work of human persons. God makes himself dependent upon the outcomes of the free and independent human creatures, but he does not then become a passive observer. Rather, he remains actively involved. The theology of history requires that, for the end of history to be meaningful and to hold any connection to the rest of history, which is necessary if we are to accept Dilthey’s thesis regarding the intelligibility of historical events as discussed in chapter three, there must be some unifying factor between each historical event. For our second claim, that such a theology of history presents a new approach to the problem of divine sovereignty and human freedom, taken in light of the commitment made in chapter four that the end of history is so defined as to have been observed, we must show not only that God is sovereign at the end of history, but also that God works together with humanity such that individual human actions work within the framework of God to bring about an end to history where God is fully sovereign.

⁹⁸⁸ ST3, 495; the extended discussion of this is at the end of chapter six.

2 Field Theory Reframed

As we have seen in chapters five and six, Pannenberg initially introduces the concept of field theory to provide an account of causation by the immaterial God but quickly finds that the scientific application yields too direct a causal connection between creator and created. Pannenberg therefore suggests that the philosophical understanding of field theory, grounded in Stoicism, is a more apt application for his purposes.

Complicating Pannenberg's usage of field theory is his later move, as we have seen, to backtrack his earlier comments that field theory is being used as 'more' than 'mere metaphor,' by declaring field theory functions metaphorically. In order resolve this inconsistency, I propose the focus on field be in relation to the way causality works between matter and the field, yet connect it via temporality rather than through spatial or material concerns. In other words, I argue that God exerts a causal influence upon the world in the same manner that field exerts a causal influence upon the world, but God is neither identical with field, nor is the focus on material divine causation, only temporal manifestation, as elucidated below.

At its core, Pannenberg's theology needs a form of causation that allows there to be a defined end to history, but does not lapse into a sort of deterministic final causation as implied by Teilhard's Omega Point. Pannenberg adapts Teilhard's radial energy through an appeal to Polanyi, who likewise is opposed to a mechanistic view of natural causation, through field theory. The goal of such a view is to describe divine causation 'from below' or as part of the universal structure of the cosmos, rather than 'from above,' which would be too deterministic.

Simply understood, in order for Pannenberg to avoid the top-down causality (or 'pulling' toward a future) that a macro-theory such as field theory, or Teilhard's Omega Point, would normally entail, he must give an account where God does not stand outside of history, but enters into that history, and acts as the ground for his creation to reach that goal. As introduced at the end of chapter six and elucidated below, God's cooperation

is understood to be the manifestation of himself in terms of the grounding of temporality.

The idea that the Spirit manifests as the grounding of temporality fits well within the broader context of a theology of history as outlined above, properly understood through the application of Scotist and Schelling's ideas. The application of the Scotist concept of causation shifts the framework for understanding field theory from a macro-theory to one that is concerned with individual causal events. This means that we are less concerned with the broader series being contingent, but with each interaction with God's Spirit as contingent temporal grounding, meaning that each individual decision is contingent, a necessary condition for freedom. This in turn means that God, as Spirit, is constantly 'evaluating' and 'deciding' how to manifest himself as the grounding for history, even as past events become defined (passing the *nunc*).⁹⁸⁹ The present reality, then, consists solely of our shared history, the current moment, and a shared (and already defined) end from which God creates the grounding for each new present. There is no sense of an already defined path toward that end, as this would negate the contingency of each present event. In order to fit this within the broader theology of history described, we must again turn back to Schelling.

For Pannenberg, as explored in chapter four, 'the future at issue in the dynamic of the Spirit is the entry into time of the eternity of God.'⁹⁹⁰ This eternity that enters into time, the event he describes as the 'end of history,' is the end of a 'fragmentary vision of time, with past, present, and future experienced in three distinct manners, and history instead being understood as the undivided present of life in its totality.'⁹⁹¹ Similarly, Schelling argues that the flow of history, via each present moment, is aiming toward the end of history as the fullness of the presence of God. However, due to the defined

⁹⁸⁹ For a definition of *nunc*, see chapter 1

⁹⁹⁰ ST2, 102.

⁹⁹¹ ST2, 92.

nature of this end, Schelling removes it from the actual flow of history.⁹⁹² Given the connection of God's identity to the fullness of his sovereignty, the removal of the fullness of the presence of God from the flow of our history, which it is nevertheless aiming toward, leads Schelling to declare that 'God never *is*.'⁹⁹³ Here we can clearly see that Pannenberg echoes Schelling's line, but modifies it in an important way, as discussed in chapter four, by claiming instead that 'God does not yet exist.'⁹⁹⁴ The inclusion of 'yet' proves to be the key distinction that requires something beyond Schelling provided by Pannenberg. While for Schelling the relationship between the present flow of history and the eternity of God 'cannot be explained or justified, only narrated,'⁹⁹⁵ Pannenberg's theology of history seeks to explain the mechanism for that connection via field, but, in order for this to work, we must adjust the account of field, which will also include an adjustment to the common understanding of time.

2.1 Materiality and Embracing a Muted Panentheism

Field theory, as it operates in contemporary quantum field physics, posits a field interacting with particles to bring about mass, and thus materiality, to those particles. A physical particle passes through the Higgs field, which produces a sort of 'drag' upon the particle, and so, through this interaction of the field upon the particle and the particle upon the field, these particles attain mass and become material. Other particles, such as photons, do not interact with the field and thus have no mass. The other primary function of field is in connection with the singularity at the beginning of the universe.

⁹⁹² Tyler Tritten, *Beyond Presence: The Late F. W. J. Schelling's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 341-343; For the early Schelling's view, which is fairly similar, though not as developed, see also Paul Collins Hayner, *Reason and Existence: Schelling's Philosophy of History* (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 70.

⁹⁹³ Schelling, 'System der Praktischen Philosophie nach Grundsätzen des transzendentalen Idealismus,' *Sämmtliche Werke*, Abteilung 1: Band 3, 600-604. Quote from 603, in German as 'Gott ist nie.'

⁹⁹⁴ TKG, 56.

⁹⁹⁵ George Pattison, *Eternal God/Saving Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 88.

The field produced a gravitational force upon the infinitely dense singularity to bring about the ‘Big Bang’ and the entire universe. As explained in chapter five, a number of issues arise by applying this field theologically. As many early critiques of Pannenberg noted, too close an identification of the Spirit with this field leads either to deterministic pantheism or to an assessment of field theory as superfluous, as discussed in chapter five.

In particular, for Pannenberg, the identification of the material field with the divine Spirit is to be rejected entirely. Pannenberg outright rejects any hint of panentheism. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter six, the panentheism Philip Clayton defines, positing merely no distance between God and creation, allows one to maintain a creator/creature distinction, important for both divine sovereignty and human freedom, while still considering that God occupies all space that freely acting autonomous creatures do not. As such, we act within God, as it was discussed, while still remaining distinct from God. It is important to note that this does not compromise any other aspect of Pannenberg’s theological system other than his stated objection to panentheism *prima facie*. Accepting some sort of panentheism is, however, vitally important for a few different reasons.

In order for us to engage seriously with field theory, we must consider the all-encompassing nature of the field. Even in the reframed field theory of this thesis, field-based causation is only possible because the field permeates all of space without itself being either space or matter. Of the most importance is this: if we are to speak of God as manifesting himself as the ground of history, a concept introduced at the end of chapter six, all of our activity must take place within God. Otherwise there is some time outside of God’s presence over which he holds no sovereignty, which would call into question the very nature of both God’s sovereignty and the contingent nature of that time since its sustained existence is not dependent upon God’s faithfulness, as is the rest of creation.

2.2 The Dynamic Field of Temporality and the Spirit of God

As introduced in chapter six, and extended here, it is important for our purposes that we understand God's function as the dynamic field of Spirit to be in terms of the grounding of time. To be clear, the claim here is not that time is God; rather, it is that history exists as a result of the interaction of creation with the Spirit of God manifest as the grounding field for time.

The physical field functions by acting as a gravitational force upon matter and potential matter. The 'big bang' of the universe was potential matter within the singularity interacting with the dynamic field to expand into that field, itself part of the singularity, and so to stretch out while simultaneously gaining mass and, through other fields of force interacting with each other and the newly formed matter, expand away from other massive particles. If we are to describe field in terms of temporality, but preserve the same form of causation, we should revisit the discussion of *ecstasis* from section two of chapter six.

There, the discussion was put in modified Heideggerian terms. While Heidegger suggests that conscious existence is understood in terms of '*Sein-zum-Tode*,' in chapter four, we modified this as our response to the 'end of history,' which extends beyond individual finite existence (and death).⁹⁹⁶ Pannenberg understands the ecstatic response of creation specifically to be a response to the presence of the 'prolepsis of the future' where we are confronted with the 'actual arrival' of the future, by which Pannenberg also understands the whole of history to relate, ecstatically, to the individual via the supernatural.⁹⁹⁷ To better build upon the discussion there, let us examine the connection between the 'end of history' and the way field theory works in contemporary physics.

For physics, the existence of material objects and the way they interact is dependent upon the various force fields that guide such an interaction, the one discussed most extensively in this thesis being gravitational fields, but

⁹⁹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 291.

⁹⁹⁷ Onah, *Self-Transcendance*, 208, 229.

also electro-magnetic, strong nuclear, weak nuclear, etc. For example, the gravitational field, also known as the Higgs field, interacts with already-existing particles such that these particles, when in the presence of such a field, exhibit signs of mass. The field exists in all parts of the universe, which is possible in large part because it is not material (e.g., having mass), though it is physical (can be measured).

We may extend this sort of language to time, recognizing, though, that time cannot be visualised exactly, as discussed in chapter four. Still, by appealing to Scotus, we may be able to conceive of temporal extension independent of spatial extension. Recall from chapter one that Scotus discussed potentiality in terms of modes of being. Each mode of being entailed the temporal extension of an identified contingent thing or action, without requiring its spatial extension. It had a time when it potentially occurred, and potentially did not occur, though only one was actualized. While material objects might be said to have potential spatial dimensions, actions, in this context, are not so extended. They have a potential ‘when,’ but, especially in speaking of an extension throughout the universe as in divine actions, they do not necessarily have a potential ‘where.’ Thus we can speak of the temporal as distinct from the spatial, allowing that God continually acts as the grounding for the temporal via field, while allowing the spatial/material to exist independent of him following the initial creative act.

For our purposes, we note that the existence of a defined end to history would interact with the already-existing universe to act as a grounding for temporal occurrences that move toward that end. As Pannenberg states in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, the future of God is both the goal of history and the movement of history toward that goal.⁹⁹⁸ The movement between each ‘now’ and this goal is contingent because, up until it comes into being, it does not yet exist. However, it is oriented toward a goal, and thus is still directed, though self-directed. We cannot use the concept of a temporal field to explain *creatio ex nihilo*, since the temporal field concerns an already-

⁹⁹⁸ ATP, 527.

extant universe; still it can aid in discussing *creatio continua*. The expansion of the universe includes the expansion of time as well as space.

Returning to the discussion of temporal field, our conversation is only sensible going forward if we agree, with Pannenberg, that the end of history is defined. While Pannenberg makes it clear that the resurrection gives evidence of this definite nature, it is Schelling's use of the 'end of history,' discussed in chapter two, that is particularly relevant. The end of history did not occur at the resurrection; instead the resurrection was the clearest revelation of that end, an end which, according to Schelling, was present in the *Logos* at the creation of the world. The physical universe, then, in response to the defined end that reveals God as sovereign and all history as an unfragmented unity, begins to make history toward that end. In the same way that matter will respond to a vacuum by filling it, so history will respond to the gap between its present and the future by filling it. Thus history has that defined end as a cause arising from within it.

To be sure, if God had not created the world, he would have been sovereign without history or time. His act of creation, then, caused a fragmentation in the unity of history that, by the same act, caused him either to determine the outcome of history by determining every historical instant or to allow the history of the created world to come about contingently, thus making his sovereignty and identity contingent upon that outcome. If we allow that certain events were not explicitly determined by God (e.g. the acts of sin by his creation), then, via the transitive properties of causation discussed in chapter one, all of history is contingent at the time of its initial occurrence. In his act of creation, then, God puts himself at risk, dependent upon the continued action of the created universe to work toward that defined end. The act of creation itself, then, must be motivated out of love for his uncreated creation and nothing else.

Moving back to the proleptic appearance of the end of history at the resurrection, we must also ask why this appearance should occur. If we accept that God loves his creatures, then we should expect God's desire for us to be incorporated to the end of history. So God reveals his end to us through his

actions within history for the sake of inviting our willing participation in that end. As Schelling puts it, God as the playwright enters into the play of history itself, occasionally intervening directly, to aid us bringing about his defined end.⁹⁹⁹ However, Schelling suggests that the goal of history is one toward which our actions are contingently directed, in order to preserve human freedom, but we do not actually attain it.¹⁰⁰⁰ In contrast to Schelling's position, Pannenberg affirms that the end is attained, or else our actions are meaningless since they do not contribute to a lasting end. Still the connection between our present activity and a defined future remains in tension.

Rather than an actual infinite flow of time from now until that future the length of time between now and the 'end of history' is contingent, with God continually being present to us from the eternal end of history, and providing the temporal space into which our actions flow. Thus there is a potential infinite amount of time between now and the end of history, but not an actual one, since this end has already been observed at the resurrection. God's faithfulness to creation is found in his continual provision of temporal grounding into which we are given the choice to acknowledge God as sovereign, working toward that end, or reject this, building our own false history that does not lead toward this end.¹⁰⁰¹ Thus history, and reality as an extension, is the result of a co-creation between God and the rest of creation. The prolepsis of the end of history allows us to transcend mere contingent action and move toward free action. We are given the option to choose to yield our self-determining actions to God's final sovereignty, the latter of which invites us into God's history.

Taking into account the idea of multidimensional time introduced in chapters four and five, we may draw one further connection between the functionality of space to the functionality of time. It is generally accepted that the universe is spatially expanding. This spatial expansion, though, is not into

⁹⁹⁹ Schelling, 'System der Praktischen Philosophie,' I:3, 602.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid., 603.

¹⁰⁰¹ See chapter 6 and ST2 227-228.

new, previously unknown, space, but every point in space is expanding out from every other point in space.¹⁰⁰² This is usually illustrated through something like a balloon. If a two-dimensional being lived on the surface of the balloon-like structure, and the structure were ‘inflated’ as it were, then that being would notice that each point on the surface expanded out from every other point, and the character and nature of the surface of that balloon continued to change. The expansion, however, wasn’t due to a change in the two-dimensional structure of the surface upon which the being resides, but due to an expansion into three-dimensional space. In the same way, our universe’s spatial expansion is generally accepted as to be expanding into some higher dimension beyond our three spatial dimensions.

Given that space and time are so inextricably linked, as discussed in chapters five and six, we have every reason to think that time expands in a similar manner. Now, clearly, the analogy of the balloon is not without its problems, considering one could argue about the relation between a surface and the interior, and the expansion of the universe is not understood in exactly the same manner, but it does give us a way of discussing the expansion. The spatial universe is known, according to contemporary physics, to be expanding at every point, while those points themselves are already extant. In the same way, we can argue that temporal points that have not yet occurred are expanding. In universal expansion, this allows for new spatial distances into which other objects could move, so temporally does the expansion ‘make space’ for events that have not yet occurred to expand.

Because of how history works, in that past events become fixed (if they did not, as discussed since chapter one, scientific enquiry is impossible) according to the Scotist sense of contingency, thus the expansion of historical events into the grounding of temporal field is not uniform throughout history. In the same way that our two-dimensional being, in the example above, were he to be traveling across the surface of the spherical balloon, would not have

¹⁰⁰² This is so widely accepted as to be banal. For an example of this claim, used to make the opposite claim of this thesis, in a spurious fashion, see Nicholas Everitt, *The Non-Existence of God*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 68.

to back up and traverse the distance behind him again, even as it expanded into a third dimension, so the time that has lapsed may remain fixed, even as it expands into a second dimension. Rather, the experience of expanding time is future concentrated. It is in this way that the flow of history stems from the fixed end into the horizon just beyond the present.

This is also gives a broader sense to the ‘temporal thickness’ of eternity. Rather than experience time along a single dimension, as now, the ‘thickness’ with which God experiences time, and which all humanity will at the eschaton, allows each to observe the fullness of temporal existence, thus perceiving past, present and future, in their relation, without them losing their contingency, as well as the possibility for other, as yet unnamed, dimensions of temporal experience should time prove to have more than two dimensions.

To be sure, much of this is speculative in nature. Nevertheless, the idea that time does exist as more than a single dimension is one of the least speculative claims of the thesis. Given the way that Pannenberg seeks to apply field theory to divine-human interaction, along with the various caveats I have expressed for interpreting that, to apply a temporal field theory along a multidimensional time, rather than a single dimensional time, is perhaps a small leap that resolves many of the tensions within Pannenberg’s theology. It is entirely possible that Pannenberg envisioned something of this sort, yet lacked the language to fully express it beyond that of ‘analogy.’ The use of Pannenberg’s prolepsis has one further advantage for our purposes.

2.3 From Contingency to Freedom and Divine Sovereignty

The introduction of a proleptic appearance of the end and an invitation to participate in history in a particular sort of way shifts the discussion from pure contingency to one of freedom by introducing the idea of intention. Here is where the use of Scotus and Schelling becomes particularly important. As noted above, Schelling’s clear indication that the end of history is present with the *logos* at the creation of the universe allows us to speak of the contingent

flow of history in the same manner as Pannenberg,¹⁰⁰³ but it is Schelling's discussion of dependency and freedom in the context of divine sovereignty that is of particular interest for us.

As has been stated throughout this thesis, Scotus's discussion of contingency is particularly unique in that it grants not only indeterminism, but allows for the possibility of purpose to be a noncontrary aspect of contingent actions. It is not the case only that God generally presents himself in the fullness of his sovereignty as the end of all history, but, by applying Scotist contingency to Schelling and Pannenberg, we may argue that it is the case that God presents his end to all of creation at every particular instant of existence, irrespective of the degree to which creation is aware of this end, revealing a purpose toward which or away from which we may freely direct our actions. This allows temporal space for creation to contingently respond while allowing time to continue to flow for all of creation.

For Schelling, the idealist notion of freedom, at least at the writing of his *Freiheitsschrift*, as a formal framework, is inadequate. For Schelling, 'the real and vital concept is that freedom is the capacity for good and evil.'¹⁰⁰⁴ Not only this, though, freedom also 'unmistakably is' derived from God.¹⁰⁰⁵ Thus, if we are to ground our understanding of freedom in Schelling, which Pannenberg does, we must speak of freedom in these terms.

In connection with the end of history and field, we can connect this to the prior discussion, at the start of this conclusion and at the very end of chapter six, of God's end in relation to redemption. God, having made the fullness of his sovereignty dependent on the actions of his creatures, presents those creatures capable of exercising freedom with a choice: we can follow the example of Christ in returning that freedom back to God by declaring him

¹⁰⁰³ Pannenberg argues that the end of history is present at the resurrection, rather than creation, but these two points have the same result: for Schelling and Pannenberg the end of history has already been present, while history still flows contingently from the present into the future.

¹⁰⁰⁴ SW 352, Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 23

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

Lord—which is to say sovereign, or we can reject that path and make our own history. To do the latter is to choose evil, since it rejects the Lordship of a God who demonstrates his love by yielding his sovereignty to us. The proleptic appearance of the end of history as the fullness of God’s sovereignty was presented as an appeal to our decision-making faculties. We can choose to accept this end, whose reality has been observed historically, or we can reject it and thus make our history into a false one that does not have God as its end. To do the latter is to remain in sin; to do the former is to have our history redeemed. This choice is presented continually again and again, at each new instant. In continuing to present this choice, to allow humanity the capacity to choose good and to choose evil, God grants our freedom, simultaneously presenting to us his sovereignty at the end of history, and limiting that sovereignty for the sake of our free choices.

To be sure, as discussed throughout this thesis, the motivation for God’s action is love. In chapter one it was noted, in the context of Scotus, that ‘creation is only an expression of God’s love,’ which it must be, ‘so far as it is free.’¹⁰⁰⁶ This freedom of both God and creation must be motivated out of love according to Scotus, and also Schelling’s theology, as introduced in chapter two. It is not enough for God to love himself, even himself as Trinity. A perfect love must extend outside of himself, reasoned Schelling, toward a being who can choose whether or not to return the love.¹⁰⁰⁷ Pannenberg synthesises these in the context of the God who works from the future to note that love grants existence, but it does so only contingently.¹⁰⁰⁸ At its root, love is an invitation to the other to exocentric, or ecstatic relationship. From the future, ‘God relates to the present by lovingly intending the future of presently contingent events’ but still yielding the fullness of his existence as God (his sovereignty) to our free choice.¹⁰⁰⁹ The intent of our contingency, which we

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., 35 (ch. 1 section 5.1).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Chapter two, section 2.2

¹⁰⁰⁸ Chapter 4. Section 3.4 citing TKG, 65.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., 138.

may label freedom given that it has intent, comes at the invitation of God. The same way that God creates by inviting us toward his already/not-yet future, so he invites us into exocentric/ecstatic relation with him. By leaving the choice of fulfilled existence or abandonment of a future hope to each individual, he ensures our freedom, while still guaranteeing his eventual sovereignty.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis has demonstrated that Pannenberg's theology is best understood as a theology of history, influenced by Scotus and Schelling, and that such a theology amplified by a modified application of field theory, can provide a novel response to the problem of divine sovereignty and human freedom. This is possible when, in order to create free and independent creatures, we understand God to have yielded the fullness of his sovereignty until the end of history, which has already been observed, while still operating with limited sovereignty in the midst of that history, primarily by manifesting himself as temporal grounding field throughout the cosmos from the future into the present, with time understood in a multidimensional context.

By extending Pannenberg's method of theology as comprehensively 'bottom up' in the context of other doctrines, such as the Trinity, I have presented a new methodology for doctrinal theology.¹⁰¹⁰ Further, the application of Scotist theology and Schelling's *Spätphilosophie*, with a contemporary philosophy of science applied to Pannenberg's theology, not only yields a novel approach to the perennial issue of divine sovereignty and human freedom in such a way that does justice to Pannenberg's thought, but it also advances his theology in other key areas, such as soteriology and a more robust theology of history, that have not previously been examined in this manner, particularly in a religious context. The result is a presentation of Pannenberg's theology as a comprehensive theology of history that affirms both the present reality and future confirmation of God's sovereignty with the

¹⁰¹⁰ See section 1.2 of this conclusion for a detailed discussion of this. Pannenberg does not actually suggest extending his methodology beyond Christology, yet the doctrine of the Trinity is presented, in that section, according to this new methodology, which Pannenberg does not explicitly do.

result that it means God invites humanity to freely participate in the eschatological Kingdom of God as a transformative and redemptive act. God, by the act of creation, denies his sovereignty for the sake of love, so that, through transforming our history in cooperation with him, his sovereignty might be reaffirmed through our exercise of freedom directed toward that very end.

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